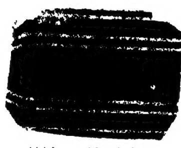
CONSUELO.

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CONSUELO.



CHAPTER I.

"YES, yes, young ladies; toss your heads as much as you please; the wisest and best among you is——But I shall not say it; for she is the only one of my class who has a particle of modesty, and I should fear, were I to name her, that she should forthwith lose that uncommon virtue which I could wish to see in you ——"

"In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti,"

sang Costanza, with an air of effrontery.

"Amen!" exclaimed all the other girls, in chorus.

"Naughty man!" said Clorinda, pouting out her pretty lips, and tapping with the handle of her fan the wrinkled and bony fingers which the singing-master had left stretched on the keys of the silent instrument.

"Go on, young ladies—go on," said the old professor, with the resigned and submissive air of one who for forty years had had to suffer for six hours daily the airs and contradictions of successive generations of female pupils. "It is not the less true," added he, putting his spectacles into their case, and his snuff-box into his pocket, without raising his eyes towards the angry and mocking group, "that this wise, this docile, this studious, this attentive, this good child, is not you, Signora Clorinda; nor you, Signora Costanza; nor you either, Signora Zulietta; neither is it Rosina; and still less Michola ——"

"In that case, it is I!"

"No; it is I!"

"By no means: it is I!"

"'Tis I!"

"'Tis I!" screamed out all at once, with their clear and thrilling voices, some fifty fair or dark-haired girls, darting like a flock of seabirds on some poor shell-fish left stranded by the waves.

The shell-fish, that is to say, the maestro—and I maintain that no other metaphor could so well express his angular movements, his filmy eyes, his red-streaked cheeks, and more especially the innumerable stiff, white, and pointed curls of his professional wig—the maestro, I say, forced back three times upon his seat, after having risen to go away, but calm and indifferent as the shell-fish itself, rocked and hardened by the

storms, had long to be entreated to declare which of his pupils deserved the praises of which he was usually so sparing, but of which he now showed himself so prodigal. At last, yielding as if with regret to the entreaties which his sarcasms had provoked, he took the roll with which he was in the habit of marking the time, and made use of it to separate and range in two lines his unruly flock. Then, advancing with a serious air between the double row of these light-headed creatures, he proceeded towards the organ-loft, and stopped before a young person who was seated, bent down, on one of the steps. She, with her elbows on her knees, and her fingers in her ears, in order not to be distracted by the noise, and twisted into a sort of coil like a squirrel sinking to sleep, conned over her lesson in a low voice, so as to disturb no one. He, solemn and triumphant, with leg advanced and outstretched arm, seemed like the shepherd Paris awarding the apple, not to the most beautiful, but to the wisest.

"Consuelo! the Spaniard!" exclaimed all the young choristers, struck at first with the utmost surprise, but almost immediately joining in a general burst of laughter, such as Homer attributes to the gods of Olympus, and which caused a blush of anger and indignation on the majestic countenance of the professor.

Little Consuelo, with her closed ears, had heard nothing of this dialogue. Her eyes were bent on vacancy, and, busied with her task, she remained some moments unconscious of the uproar. Then, perceiving herself the object of general attention, she dropped her hands on her knees, allowed her book to fall on the floor, and, petrified with astonishment not unmixed with fear, rose at length and looked around, in order to see what ridiculous person or thing afforded matter for such noisy gaiety.

"Consuelo," said the maestro, taking her hand without further explanation, "come, my good child, and sing me the '*Salve Regina*' of Pergolese, which thou hast learned but a fortnight, and which Clorinda has been studying for more than a year."

Consuelo, without replying, and without evincing either anger, shame, or embarrassment, followed the singing-master to the organ, where, sitting down, he struck with an air of triumph the key-note for his young pupil. Then Consuelo, with unaffected simplicity and ease, raised her clear and thrilling voice, and filled the lofty roof with the sweetest and purest notes with which it had ever echoed. She sang the '*Salve Regina*' without a single error—without venturing one note which was not perfectly just, full, sustained, or interrupted at the proper place; and, following with unvarying precision the instructions which the learned master had given her, fulfilling with her clear perceptions his precise and correct intentions, she accomplished, with the inexperience and indifference of a child, that which science, practice, and enthusiasm had not

perhaps done for the most perfect singer. In a word, she sang to admiration.

"It is well, my child," said the good old master, always chary of his praise. "You have studied with attention that which you have faithfully performed. Next time you shall repeat the cantata of Scarlatti which I have taught you."

"*Si, Signor Profesor*," replied Consuelo—"now may I go?"

"Yes, my child. Young ladies, the lesson is over."

Consuelo placed in her little basket her music and her crayons, as well as her black fan—the inseparable companion alike of Spaniard and Venetian—which she never used, although she never went wthout it. Then, disappearing behind the fretwork of the organ, she flew as lightly as a bird down the mysterious stairs which led to the body of the cathedral, knelt for a moment in crossing the nave, and, when just on the point of leaving the church, found beside the font a handsome young man who, smiling, presented the holy water to her. She took some of it, looking at him all the time with the self-possession of a little girl who knows and feels that she is not yet a woman, and mingling her thanks and her devotional gesture in so agreeable a fashion that the signor could not help laughing outright. Consuelo began to laugh likewise; but, all at once, as if she had recollected that some one was waiting for her, she cleared the porch and the steps in a bound, and was off in a twinkling.

In the mean time, the professor again replaced his spectacles in his huge waistcoat pocket, and thus addressed his silent scholars:—

"Shame upon you, my fair pupils!" said he. "This little girl, the youngest of you all—the latest comer in the class—is the only one of you capable of executing a solo. Even in the choruses, no matter what errors are made on every side of her, I always find her firm and steady as a note of the harpsichord. It is because she has zeal, patience, and—what you will never have, no, not one of you—a conscience!"

"Ah! now the murder is out," cried Costanza, as soon as the professor had left the church. "He only repeated it some thirty-nine times during the lesson, and now, I verily believe, he would fall ill if he did not get saying it the fortieth."

"A great wonder, indeed, that this Consuelo should get on!" exclaimed Zulietta: "she is so poor that she must work to learn something whereby to earn her bread."

"They tell me her mother was a gipsy," said Michelina, "and that the little one sang about the streets and highways before she came here. To be sure, she has not a bad voice; but then she has not a particle of intelligence, poor child! She learns merely by rote; she follows to the letter the professor's instructions—and her lungs do the rest."

"If she had the best lungs in the world, and the best brains into the bargain," said the handsome Clorinda, "I would not give my face in exchange for hers."

"I do not know that you would lose so much," replied Costanza, who had not a very exalted opinion of Clorinda's beauty.

"She is not handsome either," said another; "she is as yellow as a paschal candle. Her great eyes say just nothing at all, and then she is always so ill dressed! She is decidedly ugly."

"Poor girl! she is much to be pitied—no money—no beauty!"

Thus finished the praises of Consuelo. They comforted themselves by their contemptuous pity for having been forced to admire her singing.

CHAPTER II.

THE scene just related took place in Venice about a hundred years ago, in the church of the Mendicanti, where the celebrated maestro Porpora had just rehearsed the grand vespers which he was to direct on the following Assumption-day. The young choristers whom he had so smartly scolded were pupils of the state schools, in which they were instructed at the expense of government and afterwards received a dowry preparatory to marriage or the cloister, as Jean Jacques Rousseau, who admired their magnificent voices at the same period and in the same church, has observed. He mentions the circumstance in the charming episode in the eighth book of his Confessions. I shall not here transcribe those two admirable pages, lest the friendly reader, whose example under similar circumstances I should certainly imitate, might be unable to resume my own. Hoping, then, that the aforesaid Confessions are not at hand, I continue my narrative.

All these young ladies were not equally poor. Notwithstanding the strictness of the administration, it is certain that some gained admission, to whom it was a matter of speculation rather than necessity to receive an artistic education at the expense of the republic. For this reason it was that some permitted themselves to forget the sacred laws of equality, thanks to which they had been enabled to take their seats clandestinely along with their poorer sisters. All, therefore, did not fulfil the intentions of the austere republic respecting their future lot. From time to time there were numbers who, having received their gratuitous education, renounced their dowry to seek a more brilliant fortune elsewhere. The administration, seeing that this was inevitable, had sometimes admitted to the course of instruction the children of poor artists, whose wandering existence did not permit them a long stay in Venice. Among this number was the little Consuelo, born in Spain, and arriving from thence in Italy by the route of St. Petersburg, Constantinople, Mexico, Archangel, or any other still more direct, after the eccentric fashion of the Bohemians.

Nevertheless, she hardly merited this appellation; for she was neither Hindoo nor gipsy, and still less of any of the tribes of Israel. She was of good Spanish blood—doubtless

with a tinge of the Moresco; and though somewhat swarthy, she had a tranquillity of manner which was quite foreign to any of the wandering races. I do not wish to say anything ill of the latter. If I had invented the character of Consuelo, I do not pretend that I would have traced her parentage from Israel, or even farther; but she was altogether, as everything about her organization betrayed, of the family of Ishmael. To be sure I never saw her, not being a century old, but I was told so and I cannot contradict it. She had none of the feverish petulance, alternated by fits of apathetic languor, which distinguishes the *zingarella*; neither had she the insinuating curiosity nor the frontless audacity of Hebrew mendicancy. She was calm as the water of the lagunes, and at the same time active as the light gondolas that skimmed along their surface.

As she was growing rapidly and as her mother was very poor, her clothes were always a year too short, which gave to her long legs of fourteen years' growth, accustomed to show themselves in public, a sort of savage grace which one was pleased and at the same time sorry to see. Whether her foot was large or not, it was impossible to say, her shoes were so bad. On the other hand, her figure, confined in narrow stays ripped at every seam, was elastic and flexible as a palm-tree, but without form, fulness, or attraction. She, poor girl! thought nothing about it, accustomed as she was to hear herself called a gipsy and a wanderer by the fair daughters of the Adriatic. Her face was round, sallow, and insignificant, and would have struck nobody, if her short thick hair fastened behind her ears, and at the same time her serious and indifferent demeanour, had not given her a singularity of aspect which was but little attractive. Faces which do not please at first, by degrees lose still more the power of pleasing. The beings to whom they belong, indifferent to others, become so to themselves, and assume a negligence of aspect which repels more and more. On the contrary, beauty observes, admires, and decks itself as it were in an imaginary mirror which is always before its eyes. Ugliness forgets itself and is passed by. Nevertheless, there are two sorts of ugliness: one which suffers, and protests against the general disapprobation by habitual rage and envy —this is the true, the only ugliness. The other, ingenuous, careless, which goes quietly on its way, neither inviting nor shunning comparisons, and which wins the heart while it shocks the sense—such was the ugliness of Consuelo. Those who were sufficiently generous to interest themselves about her, at first regretted that she was not pretty; and then, correcting themselves, and patting her head with a familiarity which beauty does not permit, added—"After all, you are a good creature;" and Consuelo was perfectly satisfied, although she knew very well that that meant, "You are nothing more."

In the mean time, the young and handsome signor who had offered her the holy water at the font, stayed behind till he

had seen all the scholars disappear. He looked at them with attention, and when Clorinda, the handsomest, passed near him, he held out his moistened fingers that he might have the pleasure of touching hers. The young girl blushed with pride, and passed on, casting as she did so one of those glances of shame mixed with boldness, which are expressive neither of self-respect nor modesty.

As soon as they had disappeared in the interior of the convent, the gallant patrician returned to the nave, and addressed the preceptor who was descending more slowly the steps of the tribune.

"*Corpo di Bacco!* dear maestro," said he, "will you tell me which of your pupils sang the '*Salve Regina?*'"

"And why do you wish to know, Count Zustiniani?" said the professor, accompanying him out of the church.

"To compliment you on your pupil," replied the patrician. "You know how long I have attended vespers, and even the exercises; for you are aware what a dilettante I am in sacred music. Well, this is the first time that I have heard Pergolese sung in so perfect a manner, and as to the voice, it is the most beautiful that I have ever listened to.

"I believe it well," replied the professor, inhaling a large pinch of snuff with dignity and satisfaction.

"Tell me then the name of this celestial creature who has thrown me into such an ecstasy. In spite of your severity and your continual fault-finding, you have created the best school in all Italy. Your choruses are excellent, and your solos very good; but your music is so severe, so grand, that young girls can hardly be expected to express its beauties."

"They do not express them," said the professor mournfully, "because they do not feel them. Good voices, God be thanked, we do not want; but as for a good musical organization, alas, it is hardly to be met with!"

"You possess at least one admirably endowed. Her organ is magnificent, her sentiment perfect, her skill remarkable—name her, then."

"Is it not so?" said the professor, evading the question; "did it not delight you?"

"It took my heart by storm—it even drew tears from me—and that by means so simple, combinations so little sought after, that at first I could hardly understand it. Then I remembered what you had so often told me touching your divine art, my dear master, and for the first time I understood how much you were in the right."

"And what did I say to you?" said the maestro, with an air of triumph.

"You told me," replied the count, "that simplicity is the essence of the great, the true, the beautiful in art."

"I also told you that there was often reason to observe and applaud what was clever, and brilliant, and well combined."

"Doubtless; but between those secondary qualities and the

true manifestations of genius, there was an abyss, you said. Very well, dear maestro: your cantatrice is alone on one side, while all the rest are on the other."

"It is not less true than well expressed," observed the professor, rubbing his hands.

"Her name?" replied the count.

"What name?" rejoined the malicious professor.

"Oh, *per Dio Santo!* that of the siren whom I have just been hearing."

"What do you want with her name, Signor Count?" replied Porpora, in a tone of severity.

"Why should you wish to make a secret of it, maestro?"

"I will tell you why, if you will let me know what object you have in finding out."

"Is it not a natural and irresistible feeling to wish to see and to know the objects of our admiration?"

"Ah! that is not your only motive. My dear Count, pardon me for thus contradicting you. You are a skilful amateur and a profound connoisseur in music, as everybody knows; but you are, over and above all, proprietor of the theatre of San Samuel. It is your glory and your interest alike, to encourage the loftiest talent and the finest voices of Italy. You know that our instruction is good, and that with us alone those studies are pursued which form great musicians. You have already carried off Corilla from me, as she will one day be carried off from you by an engagement in some other theatre; so you are come to spy about, to see if you can't get a hold of some other Corilla—if, indeed, we have formed one. That is the truth, Signor Count, you must admit."

"And were it even so, dear maestro," replied the count, smiling, "what would it signify to you?—where is the harm?"

"It is a great deal of harm, Signor Count. Is it nothing to corrupt, to destroy these poor creatures?"

"Ha! my most austere professor, how long have you been the guardian angel of their tender virtues?"

"I know very well, Signor Count, I have nothing to do with them, except as regards their talent, which you disfigure and disgrace in your theatres by giving them inferior music to sing. Is it not heart-rending—is it not shameful—to see Corilla, who was just beginning to understand our serious art, descend from the sacred to the profane—from prayer to badinage—from the altar to the boards—from the sublime to the absurd—from Allegri and Palestrina to Albinoni and the barber Apollini?"

"So you refuse, in your severity, to name a girl respecting whom I can have no intention, seeing that I do not know whether she has the necessary qualifications for the theatre?"

"I absolutely refuse."

"And do you suppose I shall not find it out?"

"Alas! you will do so if you are bent upon it, but I shall do my utmost to prevent you from taking her from us."

"Very well, maestro, you are half conquered, for I have seen her—I have divined your mysterious divinity."

"So, so," replied the master, with a reserved and distrustful air; "are you sure of that?"

"My eyes and my heart have alike revealed her to me, and, that you may be convinced, I shall describe her to you. She is tall—taller, I think, than any of your pupils—fair as the snow on Friuli, and rosy as the dawn of a summer morn; she has flaxen hair, azure eyes, an exquisitely rounded form, with a ruby on her finger which burned my hand as I touched it, like sparks from a magic fire."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Porpora, with a cunning air; "in that case I have nothing to conceal. The name of your beauty is Clorinda. Go and pay your court to her; gain her over with gold, with diamonds, and gay attire. You will easily conclude an engagement with her. She will help you to replace Corilla; for the public of your theatre always prefer fine shoulders to sweet sounds, flashing eyes to a lofty intellect."

"Am I then mistaken, my dear maestro?" said the count, a little confused; "and is Clorinda but a common-place beauty?"

"But suppose my siren, my divinity, my angel, as you are pleased to call her," resumed the maestro, maliciously, "was anything but a beauty?"

"If she be deformed, I beseech you not to name her, for my illusion would be too cruelly dissipated. If she were only ugly, I could still adore her; but I should not engage her for the theatre, because talent without beauty is a misfortune, a struggle, a perpetual torment for a woman. What are you looking at, maestro, and why do you pause?"

"Why? because we are at the water-steps, and I see no gondola. But you, Count, what do you look at?"

"I was looking to see if that young fellow on the steps there, beside that plain little girl, was not my protegé, Anzoleto, the handsomest and most intelligent of all our little plebeians. Look at him, dear maestro. Do you not, like me, feel interested in him? That boy has the sweetest tenor in Venice, and he is passionately fond of music, for which he has an incredible aptitude. I have long wished to speak to you about it, and to ask you to give him lessons. I look upon him as the future support of my theatre, and hope in a few years to be repaid for all my trouble. Hola, Zoto! come hither, my child, that I may present you to the illustrious master Porpora."

Anzoleto drew his naked legs out of the water, where they hung carelessly while he amused himself stringing those pretty shells which in Venice are poetically termed *fiori di mare*. His only garments were a pair of well-worn pantaloons and a fine shirt, through the rents of which one could see his white shoulders, modelled like those of a youthful Bacchus. He had all the grace and beauty of a young Fawn, chiselled in the palmiest days of Grecian art; and his features dis-

played that singular union, not unfrequent in the creations of Grecian statuary, of careless irony with dreamy melancholy. His fine fair hair, somewhat bronzed by the sun, clustered in Antinöus-like curls about his alabaster neck; his features were regular and beautifully formed; but there was something bold and forward in the expression of his jet-black eyes which displeased the maestro. The boy promptly rose when he heard the voice of Zustiniani, pitched his shells into the lap of the little girl beside him, who without raising her eyes went on with her occupation of stringing them along with golden beads, and coming forward kissed the Count's hand, after the fashion of the country.

"Upon my word, a handsome fellow!" said the professor, giving him a tap on the cheek; "but he seems occupied with amusements rather childish for his time of life: he is fully eighteen years old, is he not?"

"Nineteen shortly, *Sior Profesor*," replied Anzoleto in the Venetian dialect; "but if I amuse myself with shells it is to help little Consuelo here to make her necklaces."

"Consuelo," said the master, advancing towards his pupil with the count and Anzoleto, "I did not imagine that you cared for ornaments."

"Oh, it is not for myself, Signor," replied Consuelo, rising cautiously to prevent the shells falling from her lap; "I make them for sale in order to procure rice and Indian corn."

"She is poor and supports her mother," said Porpora. "Listen, Consuelo: should you find yourselves in any difficulty, be sure to come and see me; but I absolutely forbid you to beg, remember."

"Oh, you need not forbid her, *Sior Profesor*," replied Anzoleto with animation; "she will never do so; and besides I would prevent her."

"But you have nothing," said the count.

"Nothing but your liberality, Eccellenza; but we share together, the little one and myself."

"She is a relative then?"

"No; she is a stranger—it is Consuelo."

"Consuelo! what a singular name!" said the count.

"A beautiful name, Eccellenza," resumed Anzoleto; "it means Consolation."

"Oh, indeed? She is your friend then, it appears?"

"She is my betrothed, Signor."

"So soon? Such children! to think of marriage already!"

"We shall marry on the day that you sign my engagement at San Samuel, Eccellenza."

"In that case you will have to wait a long time, my little ones."

"Oh, we shall wait," replied Consuelo, with the cheerful gaiety of innocence.

The count and the maestro amused themselves for some time longer with the frank remarks and repartees of the young

couple; then having arranged that Anzoleto should give the professor an opportunity of hearing his voice in the morning, they separated, leaving him to his serious occupations.

"What do you think of that little girl?" said the professor to Zustiniani.

"I saw her but an instant, and I find her sufficiently ugly to justify the maxim, that in the eyes of a youth of eighteen every woman is handsome."

"Very good," rejoined the professor; "now permit me to inform you that your divine songstress, your siren, your mysterious beauty, was no other than Consuelo."

"What! that sooty creature?—that dark and meagre grasshopper? Impossible, maestro!"

"No other, Signor Count. Would she not make a fascinating *prima donna*?"

The count stopped, looked back, and clasping his hands while he surveyed Consuelo at a distance, exclaimed in mock despair, "Just Heaven! how canst thou so err as to pour the fire of genius into heads so poorly formed?"

"So you give up your culpable intentions?" said the professor.

"Most certainly."

"You promise me?" added Porpora.

"Oh, I swear it," replied the count.

CHAPTER III.

Born in sunny Italy, brought up by chance like a sea-bird sporting on its shores, poor, an orphan, a castaway, and nevertheless happy in the present and confiding in the future, foundling as he doubtless was—Anzoleto, the handsome youth of nineteen who spent his days with little Consuelo in perfect freedom on the footways of Venice, was not as might be supposed in his first love. Too early initiated, he would perhaps have been completely corrupted and worn out, had he dwelt in our sombre climate, or had Nature endowed him with a feebler organization. But early developed and destined to a long and powerful career, his heart was pure and his senses were restrained by his will. He had met the little Spaniard by chance, singing hymns before the Madonette; and for the pleasure of exercising his voice he had joined her for hours together beneath the stars. Then they met upon the sands of the Lido to gather shell-fish, which he ate, and which she converted into chaplets and other ornaments. And then again they had met in the churches, where she prayed with all her heart, and where he gazed with all his eyes at the fine ladies. In all these interviews Consuelo had appeared to him so good, so sweet, so obliging, and so gay, that she had become his inseparable friend and companion—he knew not very well how or why. Anzoleto had known the joys of love. He felt friendship for Consuelo; and as he belonged to a country and a people where passion reigns over every other feeling, he knew

no other name for this attachment than that of love. Consuelo admitted this mode of speaking after she had addressed Anzoleto as follows:—"If you are my lover, it is then with the intention of marrying me?" To which he replied—"Certainly, if you wish it we shall marry each other." From that moment it was a settled affair. Possibly Anzoleto was amusing himself, but to Consuelo it was matter of firm conviction. Even already his young heart experienced those contradictory and complicated emotions which agitate and discompose the existence of those who love too early.

Given up to violent impulses, greedy of pleasure, loving only what promoted his happiness, hating and avoiding everything which opposed his gratifications, at heart an artist—that is to say, feeling and revelling in life with frightful intensity—he soon found that his transient attachments imposed on him the sufferings and dangers of a passion which he did not really feel; and he experienced the want of sweet companionship and of a chaste and tranquil outlet to his feelings. Then, without understanding the charm which drew him to Consuelo—having little experience of the beautiful—hardly knowing whether she was handsome or ugly—joining for her sake in amusements beneath his age—he led with her in public, on the marble floors and on the waters of Venice, a life as happy, as pure, as retired, and almost as poetic, as that of Paul and Virginia in the recesses of the forest. Although they enjoyed unrestrained liberty—no watchful, tender parents to form them to virtue—no devoted attendant to seek them and bring them back to the bosom of their homes—not even a dog to warn them of danger—they never experienced harm. They skimmed over the waters of the lagunes in all times and seasons in their open boat, without oars or pilot; they wandered over the marshes without guide, without watch, and heedless of the rising waters; they sang before the vine-covered chapels at the corners of the streets without thinking of the hour, and sometimes with no other couch than the white tiles, still warm with the summer rays. They paused before the theatre of Punchinello, and followed with riveted attention the fantastic drama of the beautiful Corisanda, queen of the puppet show, without thinking of their breakfast or the little probability there was of supper. They enjoyed the excesses of the carnival, he with his coat turned inside out, she with a bunch of old ribbons placed coquettishly over her ear. They dined sumptuously—sometimes on the balustrades of a bridge or on the steps of a palace—on shell-fish, fennel stalks, and pieces of citron. In short, they led a free and joyous life, without incurring more risk, or feeling more emotion, than might have been experienced by two young people of the same age and sex. Days, years, passed away. Anzoleto formed other connexions, while Consuelo never imagined that he could love any one but her. She became a young woman without feeling it necessary to exercise any further reserve with her betrothed; while

he saw her undergo this transformation without feeling any impatience, or desiring to change this intimacy, free as it was at once from scruple, mystery, or remorse.

It was already four years since Professor Porpora and Zustiniani had mutually introduced their little musicians, and during this period the count had never once thought of the young chorister. The professor had likewise forgotten the handsome Anzoleto, inasmuch as he had found him endowed with none of the qualities desirable in a pupil—to wit, a serious, patient disposition, absolute submission to his teacher, and complete absence of all musical studies before the period of his instruction. "Do not talk to me," said he, "about a pupil whose mind is anything else than a *tabula rasa*, or virgin wax, on which I am to make the first impression. I cannot afford to give up a year to unteach what has been learned before. If you want me to write, give me a clear surface, and that too of a good quality. If it be too hard I can make no impression on it, if too soft, I shall destroy it at the first stroke." In short, although he acknowledged the extraordinary talents of the young Anzoleto, he told the count with some temper and ironical humility, at the end of his first lesson, that his method was not adapted to a pupil so far advanced, and that a master could only embarrass and retard the natural progress and invincible development of so superior an organization.

The count sent his protegé to Professor Mellifiore, who with roulades and cadences, modulations and trills, so developed his brilliant qualities, that at twenty-three he was considered capable, in the opinion of all those who heard him in the saloons of the court, of coming out at San Samuel in the first parts. One evening the dilettanti, nobility, and artists of repute then in Venice, were requested to be present at a final and decisive trial. For the first time in his life Anzoleto doffed his plebeian attire, put on a black coat, a satin vest, and with curled and powdered hair and buckles in his shoes, glided over with a composed air to the harpsichord, where amid the glare of a hundred wax-lights and under the gaze of two or three hundred persons, he boldly distended his chest, and made the utmost display of powers that were to introduce him into a career where not one judge alone, but a whole public, hold the palm in one hand and downfall in the other.

We need not ask whether Anzoleto was secretly agitated. Nevertheless, he scarcely allowed his emotion to be apparent; and hardly had his piercing eyes divined by a stealthy glance the secret approbation which women rarely refuse to grant to so handsome a youth—hardly had the amateurs, surprised at the compass of his voice and his facility of expression, uttered a few faint murmurs of applause—when joy and hope flooded his whole being. For the first time Anzoleto, hitherto ill-instructed and undervalued, felt that he was no common man; and transported by the necessity and the consciousness of suc-

cess, he sang with an originality, an energy, and skill, that were altogether remarkable. His taste to be sure was not always pure, nor his execution faultless; but he was always able to extricate himself by his boldness, his intelligence, and enthusiasm. He failed in effects which the composer had intended, but he realized others which no one ever thought of—neither the author who composed, the professor who interpreted, nor the virtuoso who rehearsed them. His originality took the world by storm. For one innovation his awkwardness was pardoned, and for an original sentiment they excused ten rebellions against method. So true it is that in point of art the least spark of genius—the smallest flight in the direction of new conquests—exercises a greater fascination than all the resources and lights of science within known limits.

Nobody, perhaps, was able to explain these matters, and nobody escaped the common enthusiasm. Corilla began by a grand aria, well sung and loudly applauded; yet the success of the young débutant was so much greater than her own, that she could not help feeling an emotion of anger. But when Anzoleto, loaded with caresses and praises, returned to the harpsichord where she was seated, he said, with a mixture of humility and boldness, "And you, queen of song and queen of beauty! have you not one encouraging look for the poor unfortunate who fears and yet adores you?" The prima donna, surprised at so much assurance, looked more closely at the handsome countenance which till then she had hardly deigned to notice—for what vain and triumphant woman cares to cast a glance on the child of obscurity and poverty? She looked, and was struck with his beauty. The fire of his glances penetrated her soul; and, vanquished, fascinated in her turn, she directed towards him a long and earnest gaze, which served to seal his celebrity. In this memorable meeting Anzoleto had led the public, and disarmed his most redoubtable adversary; for the beautiful songstress was not only queen of the stage, but at the head of the management, and of the cabinet of Count Zustiniani.

CHAPTER IV.

In the midst of the general and somewhat exaggerated applause which the voice and manner of the débutant had drawn forth, a single auditor, seated on the extreme edge of his chair, his legs close together and his hands motionless on his knees, after the fashion of the Egyptian gods, remained dumb as a sphinx and mysterious as a hieroglyphic. It was the able professor and celebrated composer Porpora. Whilst his gallant colleague Professor Mellifiore, ascribing to himself all the honour of Anzoleto's success, plumed himself before the women and saluted the men, as if to thank them even for their looks, the master of sacred song, with eyes bent on the ground, silent and severe, seemed lost in thought. When the company, who were engaged to a ball at the palace of the Doge, had slowly de-

parted, and the most enthusiastic dilettanti, with some ladies, alone remained, Zustiniani approached the severe maestro.

"You are too hard upon us poor moderns, my dear professor," said he; "but your silence does not impose upon me. You would exclude this new and charming style which delights us all. But your heart is open in spite of you, and your ears have drunk in the seductive poison."

"Come, *Sior Profesor*," said the charming Corilla, resuming with her old master the infantine manners of the *scuola*, "you must grant me a favour."

"Away, unhappy girl!" said the master, partly smiling and partly displeased at the caresses of his inconstant pupil: "there is no farther communion between us. I know you no more. Take your sweet smiles and perfidious warblings elsewhere."

"There, now; he is coming round," said Corilla, taking with one hand the arm of the débutant, without letting go her hold of the white and ample cravat of the professor. "Come hither, Zoto, and bow the knee before the most learned maestro in all Italy. Submit thyself, my child, and disarm his rigour. One word from him, if thou couldst obtain it, would be more to thee than all the trumpets of renown."

"You have been severe towards me, Signor Professor," said Anzoleto, bending before him with mock humility; "nevertheless, my only wish for four years has been to induce you to reverse your cruel judgment; and if I have not succeeded tonight, I fear I shall never have the courage to appear before the public, loaded with your anathema."

"Child!" said the professor, rising hastily and speaking with an earnestness which imparted something noble to his unimpressive figure, "leave false and honied words to women. Never descend to the language of flattery, even to your superiors—much less to those whose suffrage you disdain. It is but an hour ago since, poor, unknown, timid, in this little corner, all your prospects hung upon a hair—on a note from your throat—a moment's failure of your resources, or the caprice of your audience. Chance, and the effort of an instant, have made you rich, celebrated, insolent. Your career is open before you, and you have only to go on, so long as your strength sustains you. Listen, then: for the first, and perhaps for the last time, you are about to hear the truth. You are in a false direction; you sing badly, and love bad music. You know nothing, and have studied nothing thoroughly. All you have is the facility which exercise imparts. You assume a passion which you do not feel; you warble and shake like those pretty coquettish damsels whom one pardons for simpering where they know not how to sing. You know not how to combine your phrases; you pronounce badly; you have a vulgar accent, a false and common style. Do not be discouraged, however, with all these defects. You have wherewithal to combat them. You have qualities which neither labour nor instruction can impart. You have that which neither bad advice nor bad example can take

away. You have the sacred fire—you have genius! Alas! it is a fire which will shine upon nothing grand, a genius that will remain for ever barren; for I have seen it in your eyes, as I have felt it in your breast. You have not the worship of art; you have not faith in the great masters, nor respect for their grand conceptions; you love glory, and glory for yourself alone. You might—you could—but, no! it is too late! Your destiny will be as the flash of a meteor—like that of——"

And the professor, thrusting his hat over his brows, turned his back, and without saluting any one, left the apartment, absorbed in mentally completing his enigmatic sentence.

Every one tried to laugh at the sententious professor; but his words left a painful impression, and a melancholy feeling of doubt, which lasted for some moments. Anzoleto was the first who apparently ceased to think of them, though they had occasioned him an intense feeling of joy, pride, anger, and emulation, which was destined to influence all his after life. He appeared exclusively engaged in pleasing Corilla, and he knew so well how to flatter her, that she was very much taken with him at this first meeting. Count Zustiniani was not jealous, and perhaps had his reasons for taking no notice of them. He was interested in the fame and success of his theatre more than in anything else in the world; not that he cared about money, but because he was a real fanatic in all that related to what are termed the *fine arts.* This, in my opinion, is a phrase which is generally employed in a very vulgar sense, and being altogether Italian, is consequently enthusiastic and without much discernment. The *culture of art*, a modern expression, which the world did not make use of a hundred years ago, has a meaning altogether different from *a taste for the fine arts.* The count was a man of taste in the common acceptation of the word—an amateur, and nothing more; but the gratification of this taste was the great business of his life. He loved to be busy about the public, and to have the public busy about him —to frequent the society of artists—to rule the fashion—to have his theatre, his luxury, his amiability, and his magnificence, made the subject of conversation. He had, in short, the ruling passion of the great noblemen of his country—namely, ostentation. To possess and direct a theatre was the best means of occupying and amusing the whole city. He would have been happy if he could have seated the whole republic at his table. When strangers asked Professor Porpora who was the Count Zustiniani, he was accustomed to reply—"He is one who loves to give entertainments, and who serves up music at his theatre as he would pheasants on his table."

It was one in the morning before the company separated. "Anzoleto," said Corilla, when alone with him in the embrasure of the balcony, "where do you live?" At this unexpected inquiry, Anzoleto grew pale and red almost at the same moment; for how could he confess to the rich and fascinating beauty before him, that he had in a manner neither house nor home? Even

this response would have been easier than to mention the miserable den where he was in the habit of taking refuge, when neither inclination nor necessity obliged him to pass the night in the open air.

"Well, what is there so extraordinary in my question?" said Corilla, laughing.

"I am asking myself," replied Anzoleto, with much presence of mind, "what royal or fairy palace were fitting home for the happy mortal who is honoured by a glance from Corilla."

"What does all this flattery mean?" said she, darting on him one of the most bewitching glances contained in the storehouse of her charms.

"That I have not that honour," replied the young man; "but that, if I had, I should be content only to float between earth and sky, like the stars."

"Or like the *cuccali*," said the songstress, bursting into a fit of laughter. It is well known that gulls (*cuccali*) are proverbially simple, and to speak of their awkwardness in the language of Venice, is equivalent to saying, in ours, 'As stupid as a goose.'

"Ridicule me—despise me," replied Anzoleto; "I would rather you should do so than not think of me at all."

"Well, then," said she, "since you must reply in metaphors, I shall take you with me in my gondola; and if I take you away from your abode, instead of taking you to it, it will be your own fault."

"If that be your motive for inquiry, my answer is brief and explicit: my home is on the steps of your palace."

"Go, then, and await me on the stairs below," said Corilla, lowering her voice; "for Zustiniani may blame the indulgence with which I have listened to your nonsense."

In the first impulse of his vanity Anzoleto disappeared, and darting towards the landing-place of the palace, to the prow of Corilla's gondola, counted the moments by the beating of his fevered pulse. But before she appeared on the steps of the palace, many thoughts had passed through the anxious and ambitious brain of the débutant. "Corilla," said he to himself, "is all powerful; but if by pleasing her I were to displease the count, or if, in virtue of my too easy triumph, I were to destroy her power, and disgust him altogether with so inconstant a beauty——"

In the midst of these perplexing thoughts, Anzoleto measured with a glance the stair, which he might yet remount, and was planning how to effect his escape, when torches gleamed from under the portico, and the beautiful Corilla, wrapped in an ermine cloak, appeared upon the upper steps, amid a group of cavaliers anxious to support her rounded elbow in the hollow of their hand, and in this manner to assist her to descend, as is the custom in Venice.

"Well," said the gondolier of the prima donna to the unde-

cided Anzoleto, "what are you doing there? Make haste into the gondola if you have permission; if not, proceed on your way, for my lord count is with the signora."

Anzoleto threw himself into the bottom of the gondola, without knowing what he did. He was stupified. But scarcely did he find himself there, when he fancied the amazement and indignation which the count would feel, should he enter into the gondola with Corilla, and find there his insolent protegé. His cruel anxiety was protracted for several minutes. The signora had stopped about half-way down the staircase; she was laughing and talking with those about her, and, in discussing a musical phrase, she repeated it in several different ways. Her clear and thrilling voice died away amid the palaces and cupolas of the canal, as the crow of the cock before the dawn, is lost in the silence of the open country.

Anzoleto, unable to contain himself, resolved to escape by the opening of the gondola which was farthest from the stair. He had already thrust aside the glass in its panel of black velvet, and had passed one leg through the opening, when the second rower of the prima donna, who was stationed at the stern, leaning over the edge of the little cabin said in a low voice, "They are singing—that is as much as to say, 'You may wait without being afraid."

"I did not know the usual custom," thought Anzoleto, who still tarried, not without some mixture of consternation. Corilla amused herself by bringing the count as far as the side of the gondola, and kept him standing there, while she repeated the "*felicissima notte*" until she had left the shore. She then came and placed herself beside her new admirer, with as much ease and self-possession as if his life and her own fortune had not been at stake.

"Look at Corilla," said Zustiniani to the Count Barberigo. "Well, I would wager my head that she is not alone in yonder gondola."

"And why do you think so?" replied Barberigo.

"Because she asked me a thousand times to accompany her to her palace."

"Is that your jealousy?"

"Oh, I have been long free from that weakness. I should be right glad if our prima donna would take a fancy to some one who would prevent her from leaving Venice, as she sometimes threatens. I could console myself for her desertion of me, but I could neither replace her voice nor her talents, nor the ardour with which she inspires the public at San Samuel."

"I understand; but who, then, is the happy favourite of this mad princess?"

The count and his friend enumerated all whom Corilla appeared to encourage during the evening. Anzoleto was absolutely the only one whom they failed to think of.

CHAPTER V.

A VIOLENT struggle arose in the breast of the happy lover, who, agitated and palpitating, was borne on the waters through the tranquil night, with the most celebrated beauty of Venice. Anzoleto was transported by his ardour, which gratified vanity rendered still more powerful. On the other hand, the fear of displeasing, of being scornfully dismissed and impeached, restrained his impetuosity. Prudent and cunning, like a true Venetian as he was, he had not aspired to the theatre for more than six years, without being well informed as to the fantastic and imperious women who governed all its intrigues. He was well assured that his reign would be of short duration, and if he did not withdraw from this dangerous honour, it was because he was taken in a measure by surprise. He had merely wished to gain tolerance by his courtesy; and, behold! his youth, his beauty, and budding glory, had inspired love! "Now," said Anzoleto, with the rapid perception which heads of his wonderful organization enjoy, "there is nothing but to make myself feared, if to morrow I would not be ridiculous. But how shall a poor devil like myself accomplish this with a haughty beauty like Corilla?" He was soon decided. He began a system of distrust, jealousy, and bitterness, of which the passionate coquetry astonished the prima donna. Their conversation may be resumed as follows:—

Anzoleto—"I know that you do not love me—that you will never love me; therefore am I sad and constrained beside you."

Corilla—"And suppose I were to love you?"

Anzoleto—"I should be wretched, because that were to fall from heaven into the abyss, and lose you perchance an hour after I had gained you, at the price of all my future happiness."

Corilla—"And what makes you think me so inconstant?"

Anzoleto—"First, the want of desert on my part; second, the ill that is said of you."

Corilla—"And who dares to asperse me?"

Anzoleto—"Everybody, because everybody adores you."

Corilla—"Then, if I were mad enough to like you, and to tell you so, would you repel me?"

Anzoleto—"I know not if I should have the power to fly; but if I had, I know that I should never behold you again."

"Very well," said Corilla, "I have a fancy to try the experiment—Anzoleto, I love you."

"I do not believe it," replied he. "If I stay, it is because I think you are only mocking me. That is a game at which you shall not frighten me, and still less shall you pique me."

"You wish to try an encounter of wit, I think."

"No, indeed; I am not in the least to be dreaded, since I give you the means of overcoming me; it is to freeze me with

terror, and drive me from your presence, in telling me seriously what you have just now uttered in jest."

"You are a knowing fellow, and I see that one must be careful what one says to you. You are one of those who not only wish to breathe the fragrance of the rose, but would pluck and preserve it. I could not have supposed you so bold and so decided at your age."

"And do you despise me therefore?"

"On the contrary, I am the more pleased with you. Good night, Anzoleto; we shall see each other again."

She held out her white hand, which he kissed passionately. "I have got off famously," said he, as he escaped by the passages leading from the canaletto.

Despairing of gaining access to his nest at so late an hour, he thought he would lie down at the first porch, to gain the heavenly repose which infancy and poverty alone know; but, for the first time in his life, he could not find a slab sufficiently smooth for his purpose. The pavement of Venice is the cleanest and whitest in the world; still, the light dust scattered over it hardly suited a dark dress of elegant material and latest fashion. And then the propriety of the thing! The boatmen who would have carefully stepped over the young plebeian, in the morning would have insulted him, and perhaps soiled his parasitic livery during his repose. What would they have thought of one reposing in the open air in silk stockings, fine linen, and lace ruffles? Anzoleto regretted his good woollen cap, worn and old no doubt, but thick, and well calculated to resist the unhealthy morning fogs of Venice. It was now towards the latter end of February; and, although the days at this period were warm and brilliant, the nights at Venice were still very cold. Then he thought he would gain admission into one of the gondolas fastened to the bank, but they were all secured under lock and key. At last he found one of which the door yielded; but in getting in, he stumbled over the legs of the barcarole, who had retired for the night. "*Per diavolo!*" said a rough voice from the bottom of the cabin, "who are you, and what do you want?"

"Is it you, Zanetto?" replied Anzoleto, recognising the man, who was generally very civil to him; "let me stretch myself beside you, and dream a while within your cabin."

"And who are you?" said Zanetto.

"Anzoleto: do you not know me?"

"*Per diavolo*, no! You have garments which Anzoleto never wore, unless he stole them. Be off! Were you the Doge in person, I would not open my bark to a man who strutted about in fine clothes when he had not a corner to rest in."

"So, so," thought Anzoleto; "the protection and favour of Count Zustiniani have exposed me to greater dangers and annoyances than they have procured me advantages. It is time that my fortune should correspond with my success, and I long

to have a few sequins to enable me to support the station which I have assumed."

Sufficiently out of sorts, he sauntered through the deserted streets, not daring to pause a moment, lest the perspiration should be checked which anger and fatigue had caused to flow freely forth. "It is well if I do not grow hoarse," said he to himself; "to-morrow the count will show me off to some foolish Aristarchus, who, if I have the least little feather in the throat in consequence of this night's want of rest, will say that I have no voice; and the Signor Count, who knows better, will repeat, 'If you had but heard him last night!' 'He is not equal, then,' the other will observe; 'or perhaps he is not in good health;' 'Or perhaps,' as a third will aver, 'he was tired last night. The truth is, he is very young to sing several days in succession. Had you not better wait till he is riper and more robust?' And the count will say, 'Diavolo! if he grow hoarse after a couple of songs, he will not answer me.' Then, to make sure that I am strong and well, they will make me exercise every day till I am out of breath, and break my voice to prove that I have lungs. To the devil with their protection, I say! Ah! if I were only free of these great folk, and in favour with the public, and courted by the theatres, I could sing in their saloons, and treat with them as equal powers.

Thus plotting, Anzoleto reached one of those little spots termed *corti* in Venice. Courts indeed they were not, but an assemblage of houses opening on a common space, corresponding with what, in Paris, is called *cité.* But there is nothing in the disposition of these pretended courts like the elegant and systematic arrangements of our modern squares. They are obscure spots, sometimes impassable, at other times allowing passage; but little frequented, and dwelt in by persons of slender fortune—labourers, workmen, or washerwomen, who stretch their linen across the road, somewhat to the annoyance of the passengers, who put up with it in return for permission to go across. Woe to the poor artist who is obliged to open the windows of his apartment in these secluded recesses, where rustic life, with its noisy, unclean habits, reappears in the heart of Venice, not two steps from large canals and sumptuous edifices! Woe to him if silence be necessary to his occupation! for, from morn till night, there is an interminable uproar, with children, fowls, and dogs, screaming and playing within the narrow space, the chatter of women in the porches, and the songs of workmen, which do not leave him a moment of repose. Happy, too, if *improvisatori* do not bawl their sonnets till they have gathered a coin from every window; or Brighella do not fix her station in the court, ready to begin her dialogue afresh with the *avocato, "Il tedesco, e il diavolo,"* until she has exhausted in vain her eloquence before the dirty children—happy spectators, who do not scruple to listen and to look on, although they have not a farthing in their possession.

But at night, when all is silent, and when the quiet moon

lights up the scene, this assemblage of houses of every period, united to each other without symmetry or pretension, divided by deep shadows full of mystery in their recesses, and of a wild spontaneous beauty, presents an infinitely picturesque assemblage. Everything is beautiful under the light of the moon. The least architectural effect assumes force and character, and the meanest balcony, with its clustering vine, reminds you of Spain and of romantic adventures with the cloak and sword. The clear atmosphere in which the distant cupolas rising above the dark mass are bathed, sheds on the minutest details of the picture a vague yet harmonious colouring, which invites one to reveries without end.

It was in the Corte Minelli, near the church of San Fantin, that Anzoleto found himself when the clocks of the different churches tolled the hour of two. A secret instinct had led his devious steps to the dwelling of one of whom he had not thought since the setting of the sun. Hardly had he entered the court, when he heard a sweet voice call him by the last syllables of his name; and raising his head he saw for an instant a faint profile shadow itself on one of the most miserable abodes of the place. A moment afterwards a door opened, and Consuelo, in a muslin petticoat and wrapped in an old black silk mantle which had served as adornment for her mother, extended one hand to him, while at the same time she placed her finger on her lip to enforce silence. They crept up the ruined stair, and seated at length on the terrace, they began one of those long whispering conversations, interrupted by kisses, which one hears by nights along the level roofs, like the converse of wandering spirits wafted through the mist, amidst the strange chimneys hooded with red turbans of all the houses of Venice.

"How, my poor friend!" said Anzoleto; "have you waited for me until now?"

"Did you not say you would give me an account of the evening, and tell me if you sang well—if you afforded pleasure—if they applauded you—if they signed your engagement?"

"And you, my best Consuelo," said Anzoleto, struck with remorse on seeing the confidence and sweetness of this poor girl, "tell me if my long absence has made you impatient—if you are not tired—if you do not feel chill on this cold terrace—if you have already supped—if you are not angry with me for coming so late—if you are uneasy—if you found fault with me."

"No such thing," she replied, throwing her arms about his neck. "If I have been impatient, it was not with you; if I felt wearied—if I was cold—I am no longer so, since you are here. Whether I have supped or not I do not know; whether I have found fault with you?—why should I find fault with you?—if I have been disquieted?—why should I have been so?—if I have been angry with you?—never!"

"You are an angel!" said Anzoleto, returning her caress.

"Ah, my only consolation! how cold and perfidious are all other hearts."

"Alas! what has happened?—what have they done to the sun of my soul?" exclaimed Consuelo, mixing with the sweet Venetian dialect the passionate expressions of her native tongue.

Anzoleto told her all that had happened—even his moonlight sail with Corilla, and more especially the encouragement which she had held out to him; only he smoothed matters over somewhat, saying nothing that could vex Consuelo, since in point of fact he had been faithful—and he told *almost* all. But there is always some minute particle of truth on which judicial inquiry has never thrown light—which no client has revealed to his advocate—which no sentence has ever aimed at except by chance—because in these few secret facts or intentions is the entire cause, the motive, the aim—the object in a word—of these great suits, always so badly pleaded and always so badly judged, whatever may be the ardour of the speakers or the coolness of the magistrate.

To return to Anzoleto. It is not necessary to say what peccadilloes he omitted, what emotions in public he translated in his own fashion, what secret palpitations in the gondola he forgot to mention. I do not think he even spoke of the gondola at all, and as to his flatteries to the cantatrice, why they were adroit mystifications by means of which he escaped her perilous advances without making her angry. Wherefore, being unwilling, and I may add unable, to mention all the temptations which he had surmounted by his prudence and caution, why, dear lady reader, should the young rogue awaken jealousy in the bosom of Consuelo? Happily for the little Spaniard she knew nothing of jealousy. This dark and bitter feeling only afflicts souls that have greatly suffered, and hitherto Consuelo had been happy in her affection as she was good. The only thing that made a profound impression upon her was the severe yet flattering denunciation of Professor Porpora on the adored head of Anzoleto. She made him repeat all the expressions which the maestro had used, and when he had done so, pondered on them long and earnestly."

"My little Consuelo," said Anzoleto without remarking her abstraction, "it is horribly cold here. Are you not afraid of getting cold? Think, my dear, that our prospects depend much more upon your voice than upon mine."

"I never get cold," said she; "but you are so lightly dressed with your fine clothes. Here now, put on this mantle."

"What would you have me do with this fine bit of torn taffeta? I would rather take shelter for half an hour in your apartment."

"'Tis well," said Consuelo, "but then we must not speak; the neighbours would hear us and we should be to blame. They are not ill-disposed; they see us together without tormenting me about it, because they know very well you do not come here at night. You would do better to sleep at home."

"Impossible! They will only open at daylight and there are still three hours to watch. See, my teeth chatter with the cold!"

"Well," said Consuelo getting up, "I shall let you into my room and return to the terrace, so that if anybody should observe it, it will be seen there is nothing wrong."

She brought him into a dilapidated apartment, where under flowers and frescoes on the wall appeared a second picture, almost in a worse condition than the first. A large square bed with a mattress of seaweed, and a spotted muslin coverlet, perfectly clean but patched with fragments of every imaginable colour; a straw chair, a little table, an antique guitar, a filagree cross—the only wealth her mother had left—a spinet, a great heap of worm-eaten music, which Professor Porpora was kind enough to lend—such was the furniture of the young artist, daughter of a poor Bohemian, the pupil of a celebrated master, and the beloved of a handsome adventurer. As there was but one chair, and as the table was covered with music, there was no seat for Anzoleto but the bed, on which he placed himself without hesitation. Hardly was he seated, when, overwhelmed with fatigue, his head fell upon the woollen cushion which served as a pillow; out almost immediately starting up again by a violent effort, he exclaimed—

"And you, my poor girl! are you going to take no rest? Ah! I am a wretch—I shall go and lie in the streets."

"No," said Consuelo, gently thrusting him back—"you are ill and I am not. My mother died a good Catholic; she is now in heaven, and sees us at this very hour. She knows you have kept the promise you made to her, never to abandon me. She knows that our affection has been pure since her death as before. She sees at this moment that I neither do nor think what is wrong—that her soul may repose in the Lord!" And here Consuelo made the sign of the cross. Anzoleto already slumbered. "I am going to tell my beads," continued Consuelo, moving away, "that you may not take the fever."

"Angel that you are!" faintly murmured Anzoleto, and he did not even perceive that he was alone. She had gone in fact to the terrace. In a short time she returned to assure herself that he was not ill, and, finding that he slept tranquilly, she gazed long and earnestly at his beautiful face, as it lay lighted by the moon.

Then, determined to resist drowsiness herself, and finding that the emotions of the evening had caused her to neglect her work, she lighted the lamp, and, seated before the little table, she noted a composition which Master Porpora had required of her for the following day.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Count Zustiniani, notwithstanding his philosophical composure, was not so indifferent to the insolent caprices of Corilla

as he pretended. Good-natured, weak, frivolous, Zustiniani was only a rake in appearance and by his social position. He could not help feeling at the bottom of his heart the ungrateful return which this insolent and foolish girl had made to his generosity; and though at that period it was considered the worst possible taste, as well at Venice as at Paris, to seem jealous, his Italian pride revolted at the absurd and miserable position in which Corilla had placed him. So, the same afternoon that had seen Anzoleto shine at the Palazzo Zustiniani, the count, after having laughed with Barberigo over the tricks of Corilla, his saloons being emptied and the wax-lights extinguished, took down his cloak and sword, and, in order to ease his mind, set off for the palazzo inhabited by the poor singer.

He found that she was alone, but still ill at case. He began to converse in a low voice with the barcarole who was mooring the gondola of the prima donna under the arch reserved for that purpose, and, by virtue of a few sequins, he easily convinced himself that he was not mistaken, and that Corilla had not been alone in the gondola; but who it was that had accompanied her he could not ascertain—the gondolier knew not. He had met Anzoleto a hundred times in the passages of the theatre, or near the Palazzo Zustiniani, but failed to recognise him when powdered and in his dark attire.

This inscrutable mystery completed the count's annoyance. He consoled himself with ridiculing his rival, the only vengeance which good breeding permitted, and not less cruel in a gay and frivolous age than murder at more serious periods. He could not sleep; and at the hour when Porpora began his instructions, he set out for the *Scuola di Mendicanti*, and the hall where the young pupils were wont to assemble.

The position of the count with regard to the learned professor was for some years past much changed. Zustiniani was no longer the musical antagonist of Porpora, but in some sort his associate and leader. He had advanced considerable sums to the establishment over which the learned maestro presided, and out of gratitude the directors had invested him with the supreme control. The two associates then were as good friends as could be expected from the intolerance of the maestro with regard to the music in vogue—an intolerance, however, which was considerably softened by the assistance and resources lavished by the count in behalf of the propagation of serious music. Besides, the latter had brought out at San Samuel an opera which the maestro had written.

"My dear master," said Zustiniani, drawing Porpora aside, "you must not only give me one of your pupils for the theatre, but say which of them is best calculated to replace Corilla. That artist is wearied, her voice has decayed, her caprices ruin us, and the public will be disgusted. Truly we must obtain a *succeditrice*." Pardon, dear reader, for this was said in Italian, and the count made no mistake.

"I have not got what you require," replied Porpora, drily.

"What! my dear maestro," exclaimed the count, "you are not going to fall back into your dark moods? Is it after all the sacrifices and all the devotion which I have manifested towards you, that you are going to deny me a slight favour when I ask your assistance and advice in my own behalf?"

"I would not be justified in granting it," replied the professor, "and what I have just said is the truth, told you by a friend, and with the desire to oblige you. I have not in my school a single person capable of replacing Corilla. I do not estimate her higher than she deserves; yet in declaring that the talent of this girl has no real worth in my eyes, I am forced to acknowledge that she possesses an experience, a skill, a facility, and a sympathy with the public, which can only be acquired by years of practice, and which could not be attained by other debutantes for a long time."

"That is true," said the count; "but we made Corilla, we saw her begin, we procured the approbation of the public; her beauty gained her three-fourths of her success, and you have individuals equally agreeable in your school. You cannot deny that, master. Come, admit that Clorinda is the most beautiful creature in the universe."

"Yes, but saucy, mincing, insupportable. The public perhaps may find her grimaces charming—but she sings false, she has neither soul nor intelligence. It is true that the public has only ears; but then she has neither memory nor address, and she could only save herself from condemnation by the happy charlatanism that succeeds with so many others."

Thus saying, the professor cast an involuntary glance upon Anzoleto, who, under favour of the count, and on pretence of listening to the class, had kept a little apart, attending to the conversation.

"It matters not," said Zustiniani, who heeded little the master's rancour; "I shall not give up my project. It is long since I have heard Clorinda. Let her come with five or six others, the prettiest that can be found. Come, Anzoleto," said he, smiling, "you are well enough attired to assume the grave air of a young professor. Go to the garden and speak to the most striking of these young beauties, and tell them that the professor and I expect them here."

Anzoleto obeyed, but whether through malice or address, he brought the ugliest, so that Jean Jacques might have said for once with truth, "Sofia was one-eyed, and Cattina was a cripple."

This *quid pro quo* was taken in good part; and after they had laughed in their sleeves, they dismissed them, in order to send those of their companions whom the professor named. A charming group soon made their appearance, with Clorinda at their head.

"What magnificent hair!" exclaimed the count, as the latter passed him with her superb tresses.

"There is much more *on* than *in* that head," said the professor, without deigning to lower his voice.

After an hour's trial the count could stand it no longer, but with courteous expressions to the young ladies, retired full of consternation, after saying in the professor's ear, "We must not think of these cockatoos!"

"Would your Excellency permit me to say a word respecting the subject which occupies you," said Anzoleto in a low voice to the count as they descended the steps.

"Speak," said the count; "do you know this marvel whom we seek?"

"Yes, Eccellenza."

"In what sea will you fish up this precious pearl?"

"At the bottom of the class, where the jealous Porpora placed her on the day when you passed your female battalion in review."

"What! is there a diamond in the school whose splendour has never reached my eyes? If Master Porpora has played me such a trick!—"

"Illustrious, the diamond of which I speak is not strictly part of the school; she is only a poor girl who sings in the choruses when they require her services, and to whom the professor gives lessons partly through charity, but still more from love of his art."

"In that case her abilities must be extraordinary, for the professor is not easily satisfied, and is no way prodigal of his time and labour. Could I have heard her perchance without knowing it?"

"Your Excellency heard her long ago when she was but a child. Now she is a young woman—able, studious, wise as the professor himself, and capable of extinguishing Corilla on the first occasion that she sings a single air beside her in the theatre."

"Does she never sing in public? Did she not sing sometimes at vespers?"

"Formerly, your Excellency, the professor took pleasure in hearing her sing in the church; but since then the *scolari*, through jealousy and revenge, have threatened to chase her from the tribune if she reappears there by their side."

"She is a girl of bad conduct then?"

"Oh Heavens! she is a virgin, pure as the newly fallen snow! But she is poor and of mean extraction—like myself, Eccellenza, whom you yet deign to elevate by your goodness—and these wicked harpies have threatened to complain to you of bringing into their class a pupil who did not belong to it."

"Where can I hear this wonder?"

"Let your Highness order the professor to make her sing before you, and you can then judge of her voice and the amount of her talent."

"Your confidence inclines me to believe you. You say I heard her long since?—I cannot remember when."

"In the church of the Mendicanti, on a general rehearsal of the '*Salve Regina*' of Pergolese."

"Oh, I remember now," exclaimed the count; "voice, accent, and intelligence equally admirable!"

"She was then but fourteen, my Lord—no better than a child."

"Yes—but now I think of it, I remember she was not handsome."

"Not handsome, Eccellenza!" exclaimed Anzoleto, quite astounded.

"She was called—let me see—was it not a Spanish name?—something out of the way?"

"It was Consuelo, my Lord."

"Yes, that is the name; you were to marry her then, a step which made the professor and myself laugh a little. Consuelo—yes, it is the same; the favourite of the professor, an intelligent girl, but very ugly."

"Very ugly?" repeated Anzoleto, as if stupified.

"Yes, my child. Do you still admire her?"

"She is my friend, Illustrissimo."

"Friend! that is to say sister or sweetheart—which of the two?"

"Sister, my master."

"In that case I can give you an answer without paining you; your idea is devoid of common sense. To replace Corilla it would require an angel of beauty, and your Consuelo, if I remember rightly, was not only ugly, but frightful!"

The count was accosted at this moment by one of his friends, and left Anzoleto, who was struck dumb with amazement, and who repeated with a sigh, "She is frightful!"

CHAPTER VII.

It may appear rather astonishing, dear reader, and yet it is very certain, that Anzoleto never had formed an opinion of the beauty or the ugliness of Consuelo. Consuelo was a being so solitary, so unknown in Venice, that no one had thought of seeking whether, beneath this veil of isolation and obscurity, intelligence and goodness had ended by showing themselves under an agreeable or insignificant form. Porpora, who had no senses but for his art, had only seen in her the artist. Her neighbours of the Corte Minelli observed, without attaching any blame to it, her innocent love for Anzoleto. At Venice they are not particular on this score. They predicted indeed very often, that she would be unhappy with this youth without business or calling, and they counselled her rather to seek to establish herself with some honest workman. But she replied to them that, as she herself was without friends or support, Anzoleto suited her perfectly, and as for six years no day had passed without their seeing them together, never seeking any concealment and never quarrelling, they had ended by ac-

customing themselves to their free and apparently indissoluble union, and no neighbour had ever paid court to the *amica* of Anzoleto. Whether was this owing to her supposed engagement or to her extreme poverty?—or was it, perhaps, that her person had no attractions for them? This last supposition is the most probable.

Every one knows, however, that from fourteen to fifteen, girls are generally thin, out of sorts, without harmony either as to proportions or movements. Towards fifteen, to use a common expression, they undergo a sort of fusion, after which they become, if not pretty, at least agreeable. It has even been remarked that it is not desirable that a young girl should grow good-looking too early.

Consuelo, like others, had gained all the benefits of adolescence; she was no longer called ugly, simply because she had ceased to be so. As she was neither Dauphine nor Infanta, however, there were no crowds of courtiers to proclaim that her royal highness grew day by day more beautiful; and no one was sufficiently solicitous to tell Anzoleto that he should have no occasion to blush for his bride.

Since Anzoleto had heard her termed ugly at an age when the word had neither sense nor meaning, he had forgotten to think about it; his vanity had taken another direction. The theatre and renown were all his care, and he had no time to think of conquests. His curiosity was appeased—he had no more to learn. At twenty-two he was in a measure *blasé*; yet his affection for Consuelo was tranquil as at eighteen, despite a few chaste kisses, taken as they were given, without shame.

Let us not be astonished at this calmness and propriety on the part of a youth in other respects not over particular. Our young people had ceased to live as described at the beginning of this history. Consuelo, now nearly sixteen, continued her somewhat wandering life, leaving the conservatory to eat her rice and repeat her lesson on the steps of the Piazetta with Anzoleto. When her mother, worn out by fatigue, ceased to sing for charity in the coffee-houses in the evening, the poor creature sought refuge in one of the most miserable garrets of the Corte Minelli, to die upon a pallet. Then the good Consuelo, quitting her no more, entirely changed her manner of life. Exclusive of the hours when the professor deigned to give his lessons, she laboured sometimes at her needle, sometimes at counter-point, but always at the bedside of her imperious and despairing mother, who had cruelly ill-treated her in her infancy, and who now presented the frightful spectacle of a last struggle without courage and without virtue. The filial piety and devotion of Consuelo never flagged for a single instant. The pleasures of youth and of her free and wandering life—even love itself—all were sacrificed without a moment's hesitation or regret. Anzoleto made bitter complaints, but finding reproaches useless, resolved to forget her and to amuse himself; but this he found impossible. He had none of

the industry of Consuelo; he learned quickly but imperfectly the inferior lessons which his teacher, to gain the salary promised by Zustiniani, gave him equally quickly and equally ill. This was all very well for Anzoleto, in whom prodigal nature made up for lost time and the effects of inferior instruction, but there were hours of leisure during which the friendly and cheerful society of Consuelo were found sadly wanting. He tried to addict himself to the habits of his class; he frequented public-houses, and wasted with young scapegraces the trifling bounties he enjoyed through the favour of Count Zustiniani. This sort of life pleased him for some weeks; but he soon found that his health and his voice were becoming sensibly impaired—that the *far-niente* was not excess, and that excess was not his element. Preserved from bad passions through a higher species of self-love, he retired to solitude and study; but they only presented a frightful mixture of gloom and difficulty. He saw that Consuelo was no less necessary to his talents than to his happiness. She was studious and persevering—living in an atmosphere of music as a bird in the air or a fish in the wave—loving to overcome difficulties without inquiring into their nature any more than a child—but impelled to combat the obstacles and penetrate the mysteries of art, by an instinct invisible as that which causes the germ to penetrate the soil and seek the air. Consuelo enjoyed one of those rare and happy temperaments for which labour is an enjoyment, a sort of repose, a necessary condition, and to which inaction would be an effort, a waste, in short a disease—if inaction indeed to such natures were possible. But they know nothing of the kind; in apparent idleness they still labour, but it is not so much reverie as meditation. In seeing them act, one would suppose that they were creating, whereas they but give expression to what has been already created. You will tell me, gentle reader, that you have never known such rare temperaments; to which I shall reply, dearly beloved reader, that I have met with but one. If so, am I older than you? Why can I not tell you that I have analysed in my own poor brain the divine mystery of this intellectual activity? But alas! friendly reader, it is neither you nor I who shall study this in ourselves.

Consuelo worked on, amusing herself the while. She persisted for hours together, either by free and capricious flights of song or by study on the book, to vanquish difficulties which would have repelled Anzoleto if left to himself; and without any idea of emulation or premeditated design, she forced him to follow her, to second her, to comprehend and to reply to her—sometimes, as it were, in the midst of almost childish bursts of laughter—sometimes borne away by the poetic and creative *fantasia*, which pervades the popular temperament of Italy and Spain. During the many years in which he was influenced by the genius of Consuelo—drinking at a source which he did not comprehend—copying her without knowing it—

Anzoleto, held besides in chains by his indolence, had become a strange compound of knowledge and ignorance, of inspiration and frivolity, of power and weakness, of boldness and awkwardness, such as had plunged Porpora at the last rehearsal into a perfect labyrinth of meditation and conjecture. The maestro did not know the secret of the riches which he had borrowed from Consuelo; for having once severely scolded the little one for her intimacy with this great idler, he had never again seen them together. Consuelo, bent upon maintaining the good-will of her master, took care whenever she saw him at a distance, if in company with Anzoleto, to hide herself with agile bounds behind a column, or to disappear in the recesses of some gondola.

These precautions were still continued, when, Consuelo having become a nurse, Anzoleto, unable to support her absence, and feeling life, hope, inspiration, and even existence failing him, returned to share her sedentary life, and to bear with her the sourness and angry whims of the dying woman. Some months before the close of her life, the unhappy creature, broken down by her sufferings, and vanquished by the filial piety of her daughter, felt her soul opened to milder emotions. She habituated herself to the attentions of Anzoleto, who, although little accustomed to acts of friendship and self-denial, displayed a zealous kindness and good-will towards the feeble sufferer. Anzoleto had an even temper and gentle demeanour. His perseverance towards her and Consuelo at length won her heart, and in her last moments she made them promise never to abandon each other. Anzoleto promised, and even felt in this solemn act a depth of feeling to which he had been hitherto a stranger. The dying woman made the engagement easier to him by saying:—"Let her be your friend, your sister, or your wife, only leave her not; she knows none, has listened to none, but you."

Consuelo, now an orphan, continued to ply her needle and study music, as well to procure means for the present as to prepare for her union with Anzoleto. During two years he continued to visit her in her garret, without experiencing any passion for her, or being able to feel it for others, so much did the charm of being with her seem preferable to all other things.

Without fully appreciating the lofty faculties of his companion, he could see that her attainments and capabilities were superior to those of any of the singers at San Samuel, or even to those of Corilla herself. To his habitual affection were now added the hope, and almost the conviction, that a community of interests would render their future existence at once brilliant and profitable. Consuelo thought little of the future: foresight was not among her good qualities. She would have cultivated music without any other end in view than that of fulfilling her vocation; and the community of interest which the practice of that art was to realise between her and her friend, had no other meaning to her than that of an associa-

tion of happiness and affection. It was therefore without apprising her of it, that he conceived the hope of realizing their dreams; and learning that Zustiniani had decided on replacing Corilla, Anzoleto, sagaciously divining the wishes of his patron, had made the proposal which has already been mentioned.

But Consuelo's ugliness—this strange, unexpected, and invincible drawback, if the count indeed were not deceived—had struck terror and consternation to his soul. So he retraced his steps to the Corte Minelli, stopping every instant to recal to his mind in a new point of view the likeness of his friend, and to repeat again and again, "Not pretty?—ugly?—frightful?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"Why do you stare at me so?" said Consuelo, seeing him enter her apartment, and fix a steady gaze upon her, without uttering a word. "One would think you had never seen me before."

"It is true, Consuelo," he replied; "I have never seen you."

"Are you crazy?" continued she; "I know not what you mean."

"Ah, Heavens! I fear I am," exclaimed Anzoleto. "I have a dark, hideous spot in my brain, which prevents me from seeing you."

"Holy Virgin! you are ill, my friend!"

"No, dear girl; calm yourself, and let us endeavour to see clearly. Tell me, Consuelo, do you think me handsome?"

"Surely I do, since I love you."

"But if you did not love me, what would you think of me then?"

"How can I know?"

"But when you look at other men, do you know whether they are handsome or ugly?"

"Yes; but I find you handsomer than the handsomest."

"Is it because I am so or because you love me?"

"Both one and the other, I think. Everybody calls you handsome, and you know that you are so. But why do you ask?"

"I wish to know if you would love me were I frightful?"

"I should not be aware of it perhaps."

"Do you believe, then, that it is possible to love one who is ugly?"

"Why not, since you love me?"

"Are you ugly, then, Consuelo? Tell me truly—are you indeed ugly?"

"They have always told me so—do you not see it?"

"No; in truth, I see no such thing."

"In that case, I am handsome enough, and am well satisfied."

"Hold there, Consuelo. When you look at me so sweetly, so lovingly, so naturally, I think you prettier far than Corilla:

but I want to know if it be an illusion of my imagination or reality. I know the expression of your countenance; I know that it is good, and that it pleases me. When I am angry, it calms me; when sorrowful, it cheers me; when I am cast down, it revives me. But your features, Consuelo, I cannot tell if they are ugly or not."

"But I ask you once more, what does it concern you?"

"I must know; tell me, therefore, if it be possible for a handsome man to love an ugly woman."

"You loved my poor mother, who was no better than a spectre, and I loved her so dearly!"

"And did you think her ugly?"

"No; did you?"

"I thought nothing about it. But, to love with passion, Consuelo—for, in truth, I love you passionately, do I not? I cannot live without you—cannot quit you. Is not that love, Consuelo?"

"Could it be anything else?"

"Could it be friendship?"

"Yes, it might, indeed, be friendship—"

Here the much surprised Consuelo paused and looked attentively at Anzoleto, while he, falling into a melancholy reverie, asked himself for the first time whether it was love or friendship which he felt for Consuelo; or whether the moderation and propriety of his demeanour were the result of respect or indifference. For the first time he looked at the young girl with the eyes of a youth; analysed, not without difficulty, her face, her form, her eyes—all the details in fine of which he had had hitherto but a confused ideal in his mind. For the first time Consuelo was embarrassed by the demeanour of her friend. She blushed, her heart beat with violence, and she turned aside her head, unable to support Anzoleto's gaze. At last, as he preserved a silence which she did not care to break, a feeling of anguish took possession of her heart, tears rolled down her cheeks, and she hid her face in her hands.

"Oh, I see it plainly," said she; "you have come to tell me that you will no longer have me for your friend."

"No, no; I did not say that—I did not say that!" exclaimed Anzoleto, terrified by the tears which he caused her to shed for the first time; and, restored to all his brotherly feeling, he folded Consuelo in his arms. But as she turned her head aside, he kissed, in place of her calm, cool cheek, a glowing shoulder, ill-concealed by a handkerchief of black lace.

"I know not well what ails me," exclaimed Consuelo, tearing herself from his arms; "I think I am ill; I feel as if I were going to die."

"You must not die," said Anzoleto, following and supporting her in his arms; "you are fair, Consuelo—yes, you are fair!"

In truth, she was then very fair. Anzoleto never inquired how, but he could not help repeating it, for his heart felt it warmly.

"But," said Consuelo, pale and agitated, "why do you insist so on finding me pretty to-day?"

"Would you not wish to be so, dear Consuelo?"

"Yes, for you!"

"And for others too?"

"It concerns me not."

"But if it influenced our future prospects?" Here Anzoleto, seeing the uneasiness which he caused his betrothed, told her candidly all that had occurred between the count and himself. And when he came to repeat the expressions, anything but flattering, which Zustiniani had employed when speaking of her, the good Consuelo, now perfectly tranquil, could not restrain a violent burst of laughter, drying at the same time her tear-stained eyes.

"Well?" said Anzoleto, surprised at this total absence of vanity, "do you take it so coolly? Ah! Consuelo, I can see that you are a little coquette. You know very well that you are not ugly."

"Listen," said she, smiling; "since you are so serious about trifles, I find I must satisfy you a little. I never was a coquette, and not being handsome, do not wish to seem ridiculous. But as to being ugly, I am no longer so."

"Indeed! Who has told you?"

"First it was my mother, who was never uneasy about my ugliness. I heard her often say that she was far less passable than I in her infancy, and yet when she was twenty she was the handsomest girl in Burgos. You know that when the people looked at her in the cafés where she sang, they said, 'this woman must have been once beautiful.' See, my good friend, beauty is fleeting; when its possessor is sunk in poverty it lasts for a moment and then is no more. I might become handsome—who knows?—if I was not to be too much exhausted, if I got sound rest, and did not suffer too much from hunger."

"Consuelo, we will never part. I shall soon be rich. You will then want for nothing, and can be pretty at your ease."

"Heaven grant it; but God's will be done!"

"But all this is nothing to the purpose; we must see if the count will find you handsome enough for the theatre."

"That hard-hearted count! Let us trust that he will not be too exacting."

"First and foremost then, you are not ugly?"

"No; I am not ugly. I heard the glass-blower over the way there say not long ago to his wife—'Do you know that little Consuelo is not so much amiss. She has a fine figure, and when she laughs she fills one's heart with joy; but when she sings, oh, how beautiful she is!'"

"And what did the glass-blower's wife say?"

"She said—'What is it to you? Mind your business. What has a married man to do with young girls?'"

"Did she appear angry?"

"Oh, very angry."

"It is a good sign. She knew that her husband was not far wrong. Well, what more?"

"Why, the Countess Mocenigo, who gives out work and has always been kind to me, said last week to Dr. Ancillo, who was there when I called—'Only look, doctor, how this *Zitella* has grown, how fair she is and how well made!'"

"And what did the doctor say?"

"'Very true, madam,' said he; '*per Bacco!* I should not have known her: she is one of those constitutions that become handsome when they gain a little fat. She will be a fine girl, you will see that.'"

"And what more?"

"Then the superior of Santa Chiara, for whom I work embroidery for the altars, said to one of the sisters—'Does not Consuelo resemble Santa Cecilia? Every time that I pray before her image I cannot help thinking of this little one, and then I pray for her that she may never fall into sin and that she may never sing but for the church.'"

"And what said the sister?"

"The sister replied—'It is true, mother—it is quite true.' As for myself, I hastened to the church and looked at their Cecilia, which is painted by a great master, and is very, very beautiful."

"And like you?"

"A little."

"And you never told me that?"

"I never thought of it."

"Dear Consuelo, you are beautiful then?"

"I do not think so; but I am not so ugly as they say. One thing is certain—they no longer call me ugly. Perhaps they think it would give me pain to hear it."

"Let me see, little Consuelo; look at me. First, you have the most beautiful eyes in the world."

"But my mouth is large," said Consuelo, laughing, and taking up a broken bit of looking-glass, which served her as a *pysche*.

"It is not very small indeed, but then what glorious teeth!" said Anzoleto; "they are as white as pearls, and when you smile you show them all."

"In that case you must say something that will make me laugh, when we are with the count."

"You have magnificent hair, Consuelo."

"Oh yes; would you like to see it?" and she loosed the pins which fastened it, and her dark shining locks fell in flowing masses to the floor.

"Your chest is broad, your waist small, your shoulders—ah, they are beautiful, Consuelo!"

"My feet," said Consuelo, turning the conversation, "are not so bad;" and she held up a little Andalusian foot, a beauty almost unknown in Venice.

"Your hand is beautiful, also," said Anzoleto, kissing for the

first time that hand which he had hitherto clasped only in compassion. "Let me see your arms."

"But you have seen them a hundred times," said she, removing her long gloves.

"No; I have never seen them," said Anzoleto, whose admiration every moment increased, and he again relapsed into silence, gazing with beaming eyes on the young girl, in whom each moment he discovered new beauties.

All at once Consuelo, embarrassed by this display, endeavoured to regain her former quiet enjoyment, and began to pace up and down the apartment, gesticulating and singing from time to time in a somewhat exaggerated fashion, several passages from the lyric drama, just as if she were a performer on the stage.

"Magnificent!" exclaimed Anzoleto, ravished with surprise at finding her capable of a display which she had not hitherto manifested.

"It is anything but magnificent," said Consuelo, reseating herself; "and I hope you only spoke in jest."

"It would be magnificent on the boards at any rate. I assure you there would not be a gesture too much. Corilla would burst with jealousy, for it is just the way she gets on when they applaud her to the skies."

"My dear Anzoleto, I do not wish that Corilla should grow jealous about any such nonsense; if the public were to applaud me merely because I know how to ape her, I would never appear before them."

"You would do better then?"

"I hope so, or I should never attempt it."

"Very well; how would you manage?"

"I cannot say."

"Try."

"No; for all this is but a dream; and until they have decided whether I am ugly or not, we had better not plan any more fine projects. Perhaps we are a little mad just now, and after all, as the count has said, Consuelo may be frightful."

This last supposition caused Anzoleto to take his leave.

CHAPTER IX.

At this period of his life, though almost unknown to biographers, Porpora, one of the best Italian composers of the eighteenth century, the pupil of Scarlatti, the master of Hasse, Farinelli, Cafariello, Mingotti, Salimbini, Hubert (surnamed the Porporino), of Gabrielli, of Monteni—in a word, the founder of the most celebrated school of his time—languished in obscurity at Venice, in a condition bordering on poverty and despair. Nevertheless, he had formerly been director of the conservatory of the *Aspedaletto* in the same city, and this period of his life had been even brilliant. He had there written and performed his best operas, his most beautiful can-

tatas, and his finest church music. Invited to Vienna in 1728, he had there after some effort gained the favour of the Emperor Charles VI. Patronised at the court of Saxony, where he gave lessons to the electoral princess, Porpora from that repaired to London, where he rivalled for nine or ten years the glory of Handel, the master of masters, whose star at that period had begun to pale. The genius of the latter however obtained the supremacy, and Porpora, wounded in pride and purse, had returned to Venice to resume the direction of another conservatory. He still composed operas, but found it difficult to get them represented. His last, although written in Venice, was brought out in London, where it had no success. His genius had incurred these serious assaults, against which fortune and glory might perhaps have sustained him; but the neglect and ingratitude of Hasse, Farinelli, and Cafariello, broke his heart, soured his character, and poisoned his old age. He is known to have died miserable and neglected in his eightieth year at Naples.

At the period when Count Zustiniani, foreseeing and almost desiring the defection of Corilla, sought to replace her, Porpora was subject to violent fits of ill humour, not always without foundation; for if they preferred and sang at Venice the music of Jomelli, of Lotti, of Carissimi, of Gaspirini, and other excellent masters, they also adopted without discrimination the productions of Cocchi, of Buini, of Salvator Apollini, and other local composers, whose common and easy style served to flatter mediocrity. The operas of Hasse could not please a master justly dissatisfied. The worthy but unfortunate Porpora therefore, closing his heart and ears alike to modern productions, sought to crush them under the glory and authority of the ancients. He judged too severely of the graceful compositions of Galuppi, and even the original fantasias of Chiozzetto, a favourite composer at Venice. In short, he would only speak of Martini, Durante, Monte Verde, and Palestrina; I do not know if even Marcello and Leo found favour in his eyes. It was therefore with reserve and dissatisfaction that he received the first overtures of Zustiniani concerning his poor pupil, whose good fortune and glory he nevertheless desired to promote; for he had too much experience not to be aware of her abilities and her deserts. But he shook his head at the idea of the profanation of a genius so pure, and so liberally nurtured on the sacred manna of the old masters, and replied—"Take her if it must be so—this spotless soul, this stainless intellect—cast her to the dogs, hand her over to the brutes, for such seems the destiny of genius at the period in which we live."

This dissatisfaction, at once grave and ludicrous, gave the count a lofty idea of the merit of the pupil from the high value which the severe master attached to it.

"So, so, my dear maestro," he exclaimed: "is that indeed your opinion? is this Consuelo a creature so extraordinary, so divine?"

"You shall hear her," said Porpora, with an air of resignation, while he murmured, "It is her destiny."

The count succeeded in raising the spirits of the master from their state of depression, and led him to expect a serious reform in the choice of operas. He promised to exclude inferior productions so soon as he should succeed in getting rid of Corilla, to whose caprices he attributed their admission and success. He even dexterously gave him to understand that he would be very reserved as to Hasse; and declared that if Porpora would write an opera for Consuelo, the pupil would confer a double glory on her master in expressing his thoughts in a style which suited them, as well as realize a lyric triumph for San Samuel and for the count.

Porpora, fairly vanquished, began to thaw, and now secretly longed for the coming out of his pupil, as much as he had hitherto dreaded it from the fear that she should be the means of adding fresh lustre to the productions of his rivals. But as the count expressed some anxiety touching Consuelo's appearance, he refused to permit him to hear her in private and without preparation.

"I do not wish you to suppose," said he, in reply to the count's questions and entreaties, "that she is a beauty. A poorly dressed and timid girl, in presence of a nobleman and a judge—a child of the people, who has never been the object of the slightest attention—cannot dispense with some preparatory toilet. And besides Consuelo is one whose expression genius ennobles in an extraordinary degree. She must be seen and heard at the same time. Leave it all to me: if you are not satisfied you may leave her alone, and I shall find out means of making her a good nun, who will be the glory of the school and the instructress of future pupils." Such in fact was the destiny which Porpora had planned for Consuelo.

When he saw his pupil again, he told her that she was to be heard and an opinion given of her by the count; but as she was uneasy on the score of her looks, he gave her to understand that she would not be seen—in short, that she would sing behind the organ-screen, the count being merely present at the service in the church. He advised her, however, to dress with some attention to appearance, as she would have to be presented, and though the noble master was poor he gave her money for the purpose. Consuelo, frightened and agitated, busied for the first time in her life with attention to her person, hastened to see after her toilet and her voice. She tried the last, and found it so fresh, so brilliant, and so full, that Anzoleto to whom she sung, more than once repeated with ecstasy, "Alas! why should they require more than that she knows how to sing?"

CHAPTER X.

On the eve of the important day, Anzoleto found Consuelo's door closed and locked, and after having waited for a quarter of an hour on the stairs, he finally obtained permission to see his friend in her festal attire, the effect of which she wished to try before him. She had on a handsome flowered muslin dress, a lace handkerchief, and powder. She was so much altered, that Anzoleto was for some moments uncertain whether she had gained or lost by the change. The hesitation which Consuelo read in his eyes was as the stroke of a dagger to her heart.

"Ah!" said she, "I see very well that I do not please you. How can I hope to please a stranger, when he who loves me sees nothing agreeable in my appearance?"

"Wait a little," replied Anzoleto "I like your elegant figure in those long stays, and the distinguished air which this lace gives you. The large folds of your petticoat suit you to admiration, but I regret your long black hair. However, it is the fashion, and to-morrow you must be a lady."

"And why must I be a lady? For my part I hate this powder, which fades one, and makes even the most beautiful grow old before her time. I have an artificial air under all these furbelows: in short, I am not satisfied with myself, and I see you are not so either. Oh! by-the-bye, I was at rehearsal this morning, and saw Clorinda, who also was trying on a new dress. She was so gay, so fearless, so handsome (oh! she must be happy—you need not look twice at her to be sure of her beauty), that I feel afraid of appearing beside her before the count."

"You may be easy; the count has seen her, and has heard her too."

"And did she sing badly?"

"As she always does."

"Ah, my friend, these rivalries spoil the disposition. A little while ago, if Clorinda, who is a good girl notwithstanding her vanity, had been spoken of unfavourably by a judge, I should have been sorry for her from the bottom of my heart; I should have shared her grief and humiliation; and now I find myself rejoicing at it! To strive, to envy, to seek to injure each other, and all that for a man whom we do not love, whom we do not even know! I feel very low-spirited, my dear love, and it seems to me as if I were as much frightened by the idea of succeeding as by that of failing. It seems as if our happiness was coming to a close, and that to-morrow after the trial, whatever may be the result, I shall return to this poor apartment a different person from what I have hitherto lived in it."

Two large tears rolled down Consuelo's cheeks.

"What! are you going to cry now?" said Anzoleto. "Do you think of what you are doing? You will dim your eyes and swell your eyelids. Your eyes, Consuelo! do not spoil your eyes, which are the most beautiful feature in your face."

"Or rather the least ugly," said she, wiping away her tears. "Come, when we give ourselves up to the world we have no longer any right to weep."

Her friend tried to console her, but she was exceedingly dejected all the rest of the day; and in the evening, as soon as she was alone, she carefully brushed out the powder, combed and smoothed her ebon hair, tried on a little dress of black silk, still fresh and well preserved, which she usually wore on Sundays, and recovered some portion of her confidence on once more recognising herself in her mirror. Then she prayed fervently and thought of her mother, until, melted to tears, she cried herself to sleep. When Anzoleto came to seek her the next day in order to conduct her to the church, he found her seated before her spinet, dressed as for a holyday, and practising her trial piece. "What!" cried he, "your hair not dressed! not yet ready! It is almost the hour. What are you thinking of, Consuelo?"

"My friend," answered she resolutely, "my hair is dressed, I am ready, I am tranquil. I wish to go as I am. Those fine robes do not suit me. You like my black hair better than if it were covered with powder. This waist does not impede my breathing. Do not endeavour to change my resolution: I have made up my mind. I have prayed to God to direct me, and my mother to watch over my conduct. God has directed me to be modest and simple. My mother has visited me in my dreams, and she said what she has always said to me; "Try to sing well—Providence will do the rest." I saw her take my fine dress, my laces and my ribbons, and arrange them in the wardrobe; and then she put my black frock and my mantilla of muslin on the chair at the side of my bed. As soon as I awoke I put past my costume as she had done in the dream, and I put on the black frock and mantilla which you see. I feel more courage since I have renounced the idea of pleasing by means which I do not know how to use. Now, hear my voice; everything depends on that, you know." She sounded a note.

"Just heavens! we are lost," cried Anzoleto; "your voice is husky and your eyes are red. You have been weeping yesterday evening, Consuelo; here's a fine business! I tell you we are lost; you are foolish to dress yourself in mourning on a holyday—it brings bad luck and makes you ugly. Now quick! quick! put on your beautiful dress, while I go and buy you some rouge. You are as pale as a spectre."

This gave rise to a lively discussion between them. Anzoleto was a little rude. The poor girl's mind was again agitated, and her tears flowed afresh. Anzoleto was irritated still more, and in the midst of their debate the hour struck—the fatal hour,

(a quarter before two), just time enough to run to the church and reach it out of breath. Anzoleto cursed and swore. Consuelo, pale and trembling as the star of the morning which mirrors itself in the bosom of the lagunes, looked for the last time into her little broken mirror; then turning, she threw herself impetuously into Anzoleto's arms. "Oh, my friend," cried she, "do not scold me—do not curse me. On the contrary, press me to your heart, and drive from my cheek this deathlike paleness. May your kiss be as the fire from the altar upon the lips of Isaiah, and may God not punish us for having doubted his assistance."

Then she hastily threw her mantilla over her head, took the music in her hand, and dragging her dispirited lover after her, ran towards the church of the Mendicanti, where the crowd had already assembled to hear the magnificent music of Porpora. Anzoleto, more dead than alive, proceeded to join the count, who had appointed to meet him in his gallery: and Consuelo mounted to the organ loft, where the choir was already arranged, and the professor seated before his desk. Consuelo did not know that the gallery of the count was so situated as to command a full view of the organ loft, that he already had his eyes fixed upon her, and did not lose one of her movements.

But he could not as yet distinguish her features, for she knelt on arriving, hid her face in her hands, and began to pray with fervent devotion. "My God," said she, in the depths of her heart, "thou knowest that I do not ask thee to raise me above my rivals in order to abase them. Thou knowest that I do not wish to give myself to the world and to profane arts, in order to abandon thy love, and to lose myself in the paths of vice. Thou knowest that pride does not swell my soul, and that it is in order to live with him whom my mother permitted me to love, never to separate myself from him, to ensure his enjoyment and happiness, that I ask thee to sustain me, and to ennoble my voice and my thoughts when I shall sing thy praise!"

When the first sounds of the orchestra called Consuelo to her place, she rose slowly, her mantilla fell from her shoulders, and her face was at length visible to the impatient and restless spectators in the neighbouring tribune. But what marvellous change is here in this young girl, just now so pale, so cast down, so overwhelmed by fatigue and fear! The ether of heaven seemed to bedew her lofty forehead, while a gentle languor was diffused over the noble and graceful outlines of her figure. Her tranquil countenance expressed none of those petty passions which seek, and as it were exact, applause. There was something about her, solemn, mysterious, and elevated—at once lovely and affecting.

"Courage, my daughter!" said the professor in a low voice. "You are about to sing the music of a great master, and he is here to listen to you."

"Who?—Marcello?" said Consuelo, seeing the professor lay the Hymns of Marcello open on the desk.

"Yes—Marcello," replied he. "Sing as usual—nothing more and nothing less—and all will be well."

Marcello, then in the last year of his life, had in fact come once again to revisit Venice his birth-place, where he had gained renown as composer, as writer, and as magistrate. He had been full of courtesy towards Porpora, who had requested him to be present in his school, intending to surprise him with the performance of Consuelo, who knew his magnificent "*I cieli immensi narrano*" by heart. Nothing could be better adapted to the religious glow that now animated the heart of this noble girl. So soon as the first words of this lofty and brilliant production shone before her eyes, she felt as if wafted into another sphere. Forgetting Count Zustiniani—forgetting the spiteful glances of her rivals—forgetting even Anzoleto—she thought only of God and of Marcello, who seemed to interpret those wondrous regions whose glory she was about to celebrate. What subject so beautiful!—what conception so elevated!—

> I cieli immensi narrano
> Del grandi Iddio la gloria;
> Il firmamento lucido
> All' universo annunzia
> Quanto sieno mirabili
> Della sua destra le opere.

A divine glow overspread her features, and the sacred fire of genius darted from her large black eyes, as the vaulted roof rang with that unequalled voice, and with those lofty accents which could only proceed from an elevated intellect, joined to a good heart. After he had listened for a few instants, a torrent of delicious tears streamed from Marcello's eyes. The count, unable to restrain his emotion, exclaimed—"By the Holy Rood, this woman is beautiful! She is Santa Cecilia, Santa Teresa, Santa Consuelo! She is poetry, she is music, she is faith personified!" As for Anzoleto, who had risen, and whose trembling knees barely sufficed to sustain him with the aid of his hands, which clung convulsively to the grating of the tribune, he fell back upon his seat ready to swoon, intoxicated with pride and joy.

It required all the respect due to the locality, to prevent the numerous dilettanti in the crowd from bursting into applause as if they had been in the theatre. The count would not wait till the close of the service to express his enthusiasm to Porpora and Consuelo. She was obliged to repair to the tribune of the count to receive the thanks and gratitude of Marcello. She found him so much agitated as to be hardly able to speak.

"My daughter," said he, with a broken voice, "receive the blessing of a dying man. You have caused me to forget for an instant the mortal sufferings of many years. A miracle seems exerted in my behalf, and the unrelenting, frightful ma-

lady appears to have fled for ever at the sound of your voice. If the angels above sing like you, I shall long to quit the world in order to enjoy that happiness which you have made known to me. Blessings then be on you, oh my child, and may your earthly happiness correspond with your deserts! I have heard Faustina, Romanina, Cuzzoni, and the rest; but they are not to be named along with you. It is reserved for you to let the world hear what it has never yet heard, and to make it feel what no man has ever yet felt."

Consuelo, overwhelmed by this magnificent eulogium, bowed her head, and almost bending to the ground, kissed, without being able to utter a word, the livid fingers of the dying man; then rising she cast a look upon Anzoleto which seemed to say—"Ungrateful one, you knew not what I was!"

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the remainder of the service, Consuelo displayed energy and resources which completely removed any hesitation Count Zustiniani might have felt respecting her. She led, she animated, she sustained the choir, displaying at each instant prodigious powers, and the varied qualities of her voice rather than the strength of her lungs. For those who know how to sing do not become tired, and Consuelo sang with as little effort and labour as others might have in merely breathing. She was heard above all the rest, not because she screamed like those performers without soul and without breath, but because of the unimaginable sweetness and purity of her tones. Besides, she felt that she was understood in every minute particular. She alone, amidst the vulgar crowd, the shrill voices and imperfect trills of those around her, was a musician and a master. She filled, therefore instinctively and without ostentation, her powerful part, and as long as the service lasted she took the prominent place which she felt was necessary. After all was over, the choristers imputed it to her as a grievance and a crime; and those very persons who, failing and sinking, had as it were implored her assistance with their looks, claimed for themselves all the eulogiums which were given to the school of Porpora at large. At these eulogiums the master smiled and said nothing; but he looked at Consuelo, and Anzoleto understood very well what his look meant.

After the business of the day was over, the choristers partook of a select collation which the count had caused to be served up in one of the parlours of the convent. Two immense tables in the form of a half-moon were separated by the grating, in the centre of which, over an immense paté, there was an opening to pass the dishes, which the count himself gracefully handed round to the principal nuns and pupils. The latter, dressed as Beguines, came by dozens alternately to occupy the vacant places in the interior of the cloisters. The superior, seated next the grating, was thus at the right hand of the

count as regarded the outward hall; the seat on his left was vacant. Marcello, Porpora, the curate of the parish, and the officiating priests, some dilletanti patricians, and the lay administrators of the school, together with the handsome Anzoleto with his black coat and sword, had a place at the secular table. The young singers, though usually animated enough on such occasions, what with the pleasure of feasting, of conversing with gentlemen, the desire of pleasing, or at least of being observed—were on that day thoughtful and constrained. The project of the count had somehow transpired—for what secret can be kept in a convent without oozing out?—and each of these young girls secretly flattered herself that she should be presented by Porpora in order to succeed Corilla. The professor was even malicious enough to encourage their illusions, whether to induce them to perform better before Marcello, or to revenge himself for the previous annoyance during their course of instruction. Certain it is that Clorinda, who was one of the out-pupils of the conservatory, was there in full attire, waiting to take her place beside the count; but when she saw the despised Consuelo, with her black dress and tranquil mien, the ugly creature whom she affected to despise, henceforth esteemed a musician and the only beauty of the school, she became absolutely frightful with anger—uglier than Consuelo had ever been—ugly as Venus herself would become were she actuated by a base and degrading motive. Anzoleto, exulting in his victory, looked attentively at her, seated himself beside her, and loaded her with absurd compliments which she had not sense to understand, but which nevertheless consoled her. She imagined she would revenge herself on her rival by attracting her betrothed, and spared no pains to intoxicate him with her charms. She was no match however for her companion, and Anzoleto was acute enough to load her with ridicule.

In the mean time Count Zustiniani, upon conversing with Consuelo, was amazed to find her endowed with as much tact, good sense, and conversational powers, as he had found in her talent and ability at church. Absolutely devoid of coquetry, there was a cheerful frankness and confiding good nature in her manner which inspired a sympathy equally rapid and irresistible. When the repast was at an end, he invited her to take the air in his gondola with his friends. Marcello was excused on account of his failing health; but Porpora, Barberigo, and other patricians were present, and Anzoleto was also of the party. Consuelo, who felt not quite at home among so many men, entreated the count to invite Clorinda; and Zustiniani, who did not suspect the badinage of Anzoleto with this poor girl, was not sorry to see him attracted by her. The noble count, thanks to the sprightliness of his character, his fine figure, his wealth, his theatre, and also the easy manners of the country and of the time, had a strong spice of conceit in his character. Fired by the wine of Greece and by his

musical enthusiasm, and impatient to revenge himself on the perfidious Corilla, he thought there was nothing more natural than to pay his court to Consuelo. Seating himself therefore beside her in the gondola, and so arranging that the young people should occupy the other extremity, he began to direct glances of a very significant character on his new flame. The simple and upright Consuelo took no notice. Her candour and good principle revolted at the idea that the protector of her friend could harbour ill designs; indeed, her habitual modesty, in no way affected by the splendid triumph of the day, would have made it impossible for her to believe it. She persisted therefore in respecting the illustrious signor, who adopted her along with Anzoleto, and continued to amuse herself with the party of pleasure, in which she could see no harm.

So much calmness and good faith surprised the count, who remained uncertain whether it was the joyous submission of an unresisting heart or the unsuspiciousness of perfect innocence. At eighteen years of age, however, now as well as a hundred years ago, especially with a friend such as Anzoleto, a girl could not be perfectly ignorant. Every probability was in favour of the count; nevertheless, each time that he seized the hand of his protegée, or attempted to steal his arm round her waist, he experienced an indefinable fear, and a feeling of uncertainty—almost of respect—which restrained him, he could not tell how.

Barberigo found Consuelo sufficiently attractive, and he would in his turn gladly have maintained his pretensions, had he not been restrained by motives of delicacy towards the count. "Honour to all," said he to himself, as he saw the eyes of Zustiniani swimming in an atmosphere of voluptuous delight; "my turn will come next." Meanwhile the young Barberigo, not much accustomed to look at the stars when on excursions with ladies, inquired by what right Anzoleto should appropriate the fair Clorinda; and approaching, he endeavoured to make him understand that his place was rather to take the oar than to flirt with ladies. Anzoleto, notwithstanding his acuteness, was not well bred enough to understand at first what he meant; besides, his pride was fully on a par with the insolence of the patricians. He detested them cordially, and his apparent deference towards them merely served to disguise his inward contempt. Barberigo, seeing that he took a pleasure in opposing them, bethought himself of a cruel revenge. "By Jove!" said he to Clorinda, "your friend Consuelo is getting on at a furious rate; I wonder where she will stop. Not contented with setting the town crazy with her voice, she is turning the head of the poor count. He will fall madly in love, and Corilla's affair will be soon settled."

"Oh, there is nothing to fear," exclaimed Clorinda, mockingly; "Consuelo's affections are the property of Anzoleto here, to whom in fact she is engaged. They have been burning for each other, I don't know how many years."

"I do not know how many years may be swept away in the twinkling of an eye," said Barberigo, "especially when the eyes of Zustiniani take it upon them to cast the mortal dart. Do not you think so, beautiful Clorinda?"

Anzoleto could bear it no longer. A thousand serpents already found admission into his bosom. Hitherto such a suspicion had never entered into his mind. He was transported with joy at witnessing his friend's triumph, and it was as much to give expression to his transports as to amuse his vanity, that he occupied himself in rallying the unfortunate victim of the day. After some cross purposes with Barberigo, he feigned a sudden interest in a musical discussion which Porpora was keeping up with some of the company in the centre of the bark, and thus leaving a situation which he had now no longer any wish to retain, he glided along unobserved almost to the prow. He saw at the first glance that Zustiniani did not relish his attempt to interrupt his tête-à-tête with his betrothed, for he replied coolly, and even with displeasure. At last, after several idle questions badly received, he was advised to go and listen to the instructions which the great Porpora was giving on counterpoint.

"The great Porpora is not my master," said Anzoleto, concealing the rage which devoured him. "He is Consuelo's master; and if it would only please your Highness," said he, in a low tone, bending towards the count in an insinuating manner, "that my poor Consuelo should receive no other lessons than those of her old teacher."

"Dear and well-beloved Zoto," replied the count caressingly, but at the same time with profound malice, "I have a word for your ear;" and leaning towards him he added—"Your betrothed has doubtless received lessons from you that must render her invulnerable; but if I had any pretension to offer her others, I should at least have the right of doing so during one evening."

Anzoleto felt a chill run through his frame from head to foot.

"Will your gracious Highness deign to explain yourself?" said he, in a choking voice.

"It is soon done, my good friend," replied the count in a clear tone—"*gondola for gondola.*"

Anzoleto was terrified when he found that the count had discovered his tête-à-tête with Corilla. The foolish and audacious girl had boasted to Zustiniani in a violent quarrel that they had been together. The guilty youth vainly pretended astonishment. "You had better go and listen to Porpora about the principle of the Neapolitan schools," said the count; "you will come back and tell me about it, for it is a subject that interests me much."

"I perceive, your Excellency," replied Anzoleto, frantic with rage and ready to dash himself into the sea.

"What!" said the innocent Consuelo, astonished at his

hesitation, "will you not go? Permit me, Signor Count; you shall see that I am willing to serve you." And before the count could interpose, she bounded lightly over the seat which separated her from her old master, and sat down close beside him.

The count, perceiving that matters were not far enough advanced, found it necessary to dissemble. "Anzoleto," said he, smiling, and pulling the ear of his protegé a little too hard, "my revenge is at an end. It has not proceeded nearly so far as your deserts; neither do I make the slightest comparison between the pleasure of conversing in the presence of a dozen persons with your betrothed, and the tête-à-tête which you have enjoyed in a well-closed gondola with mine."

"Signor Count!" exclaimed Anzoleto, violently agitated, "I protest on my honour——"

"Where is your honour?" resumed the count; "is it in your left ear?" And he menaced the unfortunate organ with an infliction similar to that with which he had just visited the right.

"Do you suppose your protegé has so little sense," said Anzoleto, recovering his presence of mind, "as to be guilty of such folly?"

"Guilty or not," rejoined the count, drily, "it is all the same to me." And he seated himself beside Consuelo.

CHAPTER XII.

THE musical dissertation was continued until they reached the palace of Zustiniani, where they arrived towards midnight, to partake of coffee and sherbet. From the technicalities of art they had passed on to style, musical ideas, ancient and modern forms; from that to artists and their different modes of feeling and expressing themselves. Porpora spoke with admiration of his master Scarlatti, the first who had imparted a pathetic character to religious compositions; but there he stopped, and would not admit that sacred music should trespass upon profane, in tolerating ornaments, trills, and roulades.

"Does your Highness," said Anzoleto, "find fault with these and other difficult additions, which have nevertheless constituted the glory and success of your illustrious pupil Farinelli?"

"I only disapprove of them in the church," replied the maestro; "I would have them in their proper place, which is the theatre. I wish them of a pure, sober, genuine taste, and appropriate in their modulations, not only to the subject of which they treat, but to the person and situation that are represented, and the passion which is expressed. The nymphs and shepherds may warble like any birds; their cadences may be like the flowing fountain; but Medea or Dido can only sob and roar like a wounded lioness. The coquette, indeed, may load her silly cavatina with capricious and elaborate ornament. Corilla excels in this description of music; but once she

attempts to express the deeper emotions, the passions of the human heart, she becomes inferior even to herself. In vain she struggles, in vain she swells her voice and bosom—a note misplaced, an absurd roulade, parodies in an instant the sublimity which she had hoped to reach. You have all heard Faustina Bordoni, now Madame Hasse: in situations appropriate to her brilliant qualities, she had no equal; but when Cuzzoni came, with her pure, deep feeling, to sing of pain, of prayer, or tenderness, the tears which she drew forth banished in an instant from your heart the recollection of Faustina. The solution of this is to be found in the fact that there is a showy and superficial cleverness, very different from lofty and creative genius. There is also that which amuses, which moves us, which astonishes, and which completely carries us away. I know very well that sudden and startling effects are now in fashion; but if I taught them to my pupils as useful exercises, I almost repent of it when I see the majority so abuse them—so sacrifice what is necessary to what is superfluous—the lasting emotion of the audience to cries of surprise and the darts of a feverish and transitory pleasure.

No one attempted to combat conclusions so eternally true with regard to all the arts, and which will be always applied to their varied manifestations by lofty minds. Nevertheless, the count, who was curious to know how Consuelo would sing ordinary music, pretended to combat a little the severe notions of Porpora; but seeing that the modest girl, instead of refuting his heresies, ever turned her eyes to her old master as if to solicit his victorious replies, he determined to attack herself, and asked her "if she sang upon the stage with as much ability and purity as at church?"

"I do not think," she replied, with unfeigned humility, "that I should there experience the same inspirations or acquit myself nearly so well."

"This modest and sensible reply satisfies me," said the count; "and I feel assured that if you will condescend to study those brilliant difficulties of which we every day become more greedy, you will sufficiently inspire an ardent, curious, and somewhat spoiled public."

"Study!" replied Porpora, with a meaning smile.

"Study!" cried Anzoleto, with superb disdain.

"Yes, without doubt," replied Consuelo, with her accustomed sweetness. "Though I have sometimes laboured in this direction, I do not think I should be able to rival the illustrious performers who have appeared in our time."

"You do not speak sincerely," exclaimed Anzoleto, with animation. "Eccelenza, she does not speak the truth.—Ask her to try the most elaborate and difficult airs in the repertory of the theatre, and you will see what she can do."

"If I did not think she were tired," said the count, whose eyes sparkled with impatience and curiosity. Consuelo turned hers artlessly to Porpora, as if to await his command.

"Why, as to that," said he, "such a trifle could not tire her; and as we are here a select few, we can listen to her talent in every description of music. Come, Signor Count, choose an air, and accompany it yourself on the harpsichord."

"The emotion which the sound of her voice would occasion me," replied Zustiniani, "would cause me to play falsely. Why not accompany her yourself, maestro?"

"I should wish to *see* her sing," continued Porpora; "for between us be it said I have never seen her sing. I wish to know how she demeans herself, and what she does with her mouth and with her eyes. Come, my child, arise; it is for me as well as for you that this trial is to be made."

"Let me accompany her, then," said Anzoleto, seating himself at the instrument.

"You will frighten me, O my master!" said Consuelo to Porpora.

"Fools alone are timid," replied the master. "Whoever is inspired with the love of art need fear nothing. If you tremble, it is because you are vain; if you lose your resources, it is because they are false; and if so, I shall be one of the first to say—'Consuelo is good for nought.'"

And without troubling himself as to what effect these tender encouragements might produce, the professor donned his spectacles, placed himself before his pupil, and began to beat the time on the harpsichord to give the true movement of the ritornella. They chose a brilliant, strange, and difficult air from an opera buffa of Galuppi,—*The Diavolessa,*—in order to test her in a species of art the most opposite to that in which she had succeeded in the morning. The young girl enjoyed a facility so prodigious as to be able, almost without study and as if in sport, to overcome, with her pliable and powerful voice, all the difficulties of execution then known. Porpora had recommended and made her repeat such exercises from time to time, in order to see that she did not neglect them; but he was quite unaware of the ability of his wonderful pupil in this respect. As if to revenge herself for the bluntness which he had displayed, Consuelo was roguish enough to add to the *The Diavolessa* a multitude of turns and ornaments until then esteemed impracticable, but which she improvised with as much unconcern and calmness as if she had studied them with care.

These embellishments were so skilful in their modulations, of a character so energetic, wild, and startling, and mingled in the midst of their most impetuous gaiety with accents so mournful, that a shudder of terror replaced the enthusiasm of the audience, and Porpora, rising suddenly, cried out with a loud voice—"You are the devil in person!"

Consuelo finished her air with a *crescendo di forza* which excited shouts of admiration, while she reseated herself upon her chair with a burst of laughter.

"Wicked girl!" said Porpora to her, "you have played me a trick which deserves hanging. You have mocked me. You

have hidden from me half your studies and your powers. It is long since I could teach you anything, and you have received my lessons from hypocrisy; perhaps to steal from me the secrets of composition and of teaching, in order to surpass me in everything, and make me pass afterwards for an old pedant."

"Dear master," replied Consuelo, "I have done no more than imitate your roguery towards the Emperor Charles. Have you not often told me that adventure?—how his imperial majesty did not like trills, and had forbidden you to introduce a solitary one into your oratorio; and how, having scrupulously respected his commands even to the end of the work, you gave him a tasteful *divertimento* in the final fugue, commencing it by four ascending trills, repeated *ad infinitum* afterwards in the *stretto* by all the parts? You have this evening been pleading against the abuse of embellishments, and yet you ordered me to use them. I have made use of too many, in order to prove to you that I likewise can be extravagant, a fault of which I am quite willing to plead guilty."

"I tell you that you are Beelzebub in person," returned Porpora. "Now sing us something human, and sing as you understand it, for I see plainly that I can no longer be your master."

"You will always be my respected and well-beloved master," cried she, throwing herself upon his neck and pressing him to her heart; "it is to you that I owe my bread and my instruction for ten years. Oh, my master! they say that you have formed only ingrates: may God deprive me on the instant of my love and my voice, if I carry in my heart the poison of pride and ingratitude!"

Porpora turned pale, stammered some words, and imprinted a paternal kiss upon the brow of his pupil; but he left there a tear, and Consuelo, who did not dare to wipe it off, felt that cold and bitter tear of neglected old age and unhappy genius slowly dry upon her forehead. She felt deeply affected with a sort of religious terror, which threw a shade over all her gaiety, and extinguished all her fancy for the rest of the evening. An hour afterwards, when they had lavished upon her all the usual phrases of admiration, surprise, and rapture, without being able to draw her from her melancholy, they asked for a specimen of her dramatic talent. She sang a grand air of Jomelli, from the opera of *Didone Abandonata*. Never had she felt in so great a degree the necessity of breathing forth her sadness; she was sublime in pathos, in simplicity, in grandeur, and her features and expression were even more beautiful than they had been at the church. Her complexion was flushed with a feverish glow; her eyes shot forth lurid lightnings; she was no longer a saint, she was even more—she was a woman consumed by love. The count, his friend Barberigo, Anzoleto, and I believe even the old Porpora himself, were almost out of their senses. Clorinda was suffocated with despair. Consuelo,

to whom the count announced that on the morrow her engagement should be drawn up and signed, begged of him to promise her a second favour, and to engage his word to her after the manner of the ancient chevaliers, without knowing to what it referred. He did so, and the company separated, overpowered by that delicious emotion which is caused by great events and swayed at pleasure by great geniuses.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHILE Consuelo was achieving all these triumphs, Anzoleto had lived so completely in her as to forget himself; nevertheless, when the count in dismissing him mentioned the engagement of his betrothed, without saying a word of his own, he called to mind the coolness with which he had been treated during the evening, and the dread of being ruined without remedy poisoned all his joy. The idea darted across his mind to leave Consuelo on the steps, leaning on Porpora's arm, and to return to cast himself at the feet of his benefactor; but as at this moment he hated him, we must say in his praise that he withstood the temptation to humiliate himself. When he had taken leave of Porpora, and prepared to accompany Consuelo along the canal, the gondoliers of the count informed him that by the commands of their master the gondola waited to conduct the signora home. A cold perspiration burst upon his forehead. "The signora," said he, rudely, "is accustomed to use her own limbs; she is much obliged to the count for his attentions."

"By what right do you refuse for her?" said the count, who was close behind him. Anzoleto turned and saw him, not with uncovered head as a man who dismissed his guests, but with his cloak thrown over his shoulders, his hat in one hand, and his sword in the other, as one who seeks adventures. Anzoleto was so enraged, that a thought of stabbing him with the long narrow knife which a Venetian always carried about concealed on his person, flashed across his mind. "I hope, madam," said the count, in a firm voice, "that you will not offer me the affront of refusing my gondola to take you home, and cause me the vexa-tion of not permitting me to assist you to enter it."

Consuelo, always confiding, and suspecting nothing of what passed around her, accepted the offer, thanked him, and placing her pretty rounded elbow in the hand of the count, she sprang without ceremony into the gondola. Then a dumb but energetic dialogue took place between the count and Anzoleto. The count, with one foot on the bank and one on the bark, measured Anzoleto with his eye, who, standing on the last step of the stairs leading from the water's edge to the palace, measured him with a fierce air in return, his hand in his breast and grasping the handle of his knife. A single step, and the count was lost. What was most characteristic of the Venetian

disposition in this rapid and silent scene, was, that the two rivals watched each other without either hastening the catastrophe. The count was determined to torture his rival by apparent irresolution, and he did so at leisure, although he saw and comprehended the gesture of Anzoleto. On his side Anzoleto had strength to wait, without betraying himself, until it would please the count to finish his malicious pleasantry or give up his life. This pantomime lasted two minutes, which seemed to Anzoleto an age and which the count supported with stoical disdain. The count then made a profound bow to Consuelo, and turning towards his protegé, "I permit you also," said he, "to enter my gondola; in future you will know how a gallant man conducts himself;" and he stepped back to allow Anzoleto to pass into the boat. Then he gave orders to the gondolier to row to the Corte Minelli, while he remained standing on the bank, motionless as a statue. It almost seemed as if he awaited some new attempt at murder on the part of his humiliated rival.

"How does the count know your abode?" was the first word which Anzoleto addressed to his betrothed, when they were out of sight of the palace of Zustiniani.

"Because I told him," replied Consuelo.

"And why did you tell him?"

"Because he asked me."

"You do not guess then why he wished to know?"

"Probably to convey me home."

"Do you think so? Do you think he will not come to see you?"

"Come to see me? what madness! And in such a wretched abode! That would be an excess of politeness which I should never wish."

"You do well not to wish it, Consuelo; for excess of shame might ensue from this excess of honour."

"Shame! and why shame to me? In good faith I do not understand you to-night, dear Anzoleto; and I think it rather odd that you should speak of things I do not comprehend, instead of expressing your joy at our incredible and unexpected success."

"Unexpected indeed," returned Anzoleto, bitterly.

"It seemed to me that at vespers, and while they applauded me this evening, you were even more intoxicated than I was. You looked at me with such passionate eyes that my happiness was doubled in seeing it reflected from you. But now you are gloomy and out of sorts, just as when we wanted bread and our prospects were uncertain."

"And now you wish that I should rejoice in the future? Possibly it is no longer uncertain, but assuredly it presents nothing cheering for me."

"What more would we have? It is hardly a week since you appeared before the count and were received with enthusiasm."

"My success was infinitely eclipsed by yours—you know it well."

"I hope not; besides, if it were so, there can be no jealousy between us."

These ingenuous words, uttered with the utmost truth and tenderness, calmed the heart of Anzoleto. "Ah, you are right," said he, clasping his betrothed in his arms; "we cannot be jealous of each other, we cannot deceive each other:" but as he uttered these words he recalled with remorse his adventure with Corilla, and it occurred to him that the count, in order to punish him, might reveal his conduct to Consuelo whenever he had reason to suppose that she in the least encouraged him. He fell into a gloomy reverie, and Consuelo also became pensive.

"Why," said she, after a moment's silence, "did you say that we could not deceive each other? It is a great truth surely, but why did you just then think of it?"

"Hush! let us not say another word in this gondola," said Anzoleto; "they will hear what we say and tell it to the count. This velvet covering is very thin, and these palace gondolas have recesses four times as deep and as large as those for hire. Permit me to accompany you home," said he, when they had been put ashore at the entrance of the Corte Minelli.

"You know that it is contrary to our agreement and custom," replied she.

"Oh, do not refuse me," said Anzoleto, "else you will plunge me into fury and despair."

Frightened by his tone and his words, Consuelo dared no longer refuse; and when she had lighted her lamp and drawn the curtains, seeing him gloomy and lost in thought, she threw her arms around him. "How unhappy and disquieted you seem this evening!" said she; "what is the matter with you?"

"Do you not know, Consuelo? do you not guess?"

"No, on my soul!"

"Swear that you do not guess it. Swear it by the soul of your mother—by your hopes of heaven!"

"Oh, I swear it!"

"And by our love?"

"By our love."

"I believe you, Consuelo, for it would be the first time you ever uttered an untruth!"

"And now will you explain yourself?"

"I shall explain nothing. Perhaps I may have to explain myself soon; and when that moment comes, and when you have too well comprehended me, woe to us both, the day on which you know what I now suffer!"

"O Heaven! what new misfortune threatens us? What curse assails us, as we re-enter this poor chamber, where hitherto we had no secrets from each other? Something too surely told me when I left it this morning that I should return with death in my soul. What have I done that I should not enjoy a day

that promised so well? Have I not prayed God sincerely and ardently? Have I not thrust aside each proud thought? Have I not suffered from Clorinda's humiliation? Have I not obtained from the count a promise that he should engage her as *seconda donna* with us? What have I done, must I again ask, to incur the sufferings of which you speak—which I already feel since you feel them?"

"And did you indeed procure an engagement for Clorinda?"

"I am resolved upon it, and the count is a man of his word. This poor girl has always dreamed of the theatre, and has no other means of subsistence."

"And do you think that the count will part with Rosalba, who knows something, for Clorinda who knows nothing?"

"Rosalba will follow her sister Corilla's fortunes; and as to Clorinda we shall give her lessons, and teach her to turn her voice, which is not amiss, to the best account. The public, besides, will be indulgent to a pretty girl. Were she only to obtain a third place, it would be always something—a beginning—a source of subsistence."

"You are a saint, Consuelo; you do not see that this dolt, in accepting your intervention, although she should be happy in obtaining a third, or even a fourth place, will never pardon you for being first."

"What signifies her ingratitude? I know already what ingratitude and the ungrateful are."

"You?" said Anzoleto, bursting into a laugh, as he embraced her with all his old brotherly warmth.

"Oh," replied she, enchanted at having diverted him from his cares, "I should always have before my eyes the image of my noble master Porpora. Many bitter words he uttered which he thought me incapable of comprehending; but they sank deep into my heart, and shall never leave it. He is a man who has suffered greatly, and is devoured by sorrow. From his grief and his deep indignation, as well as what has escaped from him before me, I have learned that artists, my dear Anzoleto, are more wicked and dangerous than I could suppose—that the public is fickle, forgetful, cruel, and unjust—that a great career is but a heavy cross, and that glory is a crown of thorns. Yes, I know all that, and I have thought and reflected upon it so often, that I think I should neither be astonished nor cast down were I to experience it myself. Therefore it is that you have not been able to intoxicate me by the triumph of to-day—therefore it is your dark thoughts have not discouraged me. I do not yet comprehend them very well; but I know that with you, and provided you love me, I shall strive not to hate and despise mankind like my poor unhappy master, that noble yet simple old man.

In listening to his betrothed, Anzoleto recovered his serenity and his courage. She exercised great influence over him, and each day he discovered in her a firmness and rectitude which supplied everything that was wanting in himself. The terrors

with which jealousy had inspired him, were forgotten at the end of a quarter of an hour's conversation; and when she questioned him again, he was so much ashamed of having suspected a being so pure and so calm, that he ascribed his agitation to other causes. "I am only afraid," said he, "that the count will find you so superior, that he shall judge me unworthy to appear with you before the public. He seemed this evening to have forgotten my very existence. He did not even perceive that in accompanying you I played well. In fine, when he told you of your engagement, he did not say a word of mine. How is it that you did not remark that?"

"It never entered my head that I should be engaged without you. Does he not know that nothing would persuade me to it?—that we are betrothed?—that we love each other? Have you not told him all this?"

"I have told him so, but perhaps he thinks that I wish to boast, Consuelo."

"In that case I shall boast myself of my love, Anzoleto; I shall tell him so that he cannot doubt it. But you are deceived, my friend; the count has not thought it necessary to speak of your engagement, because it was a settled thing since the day that you sung so well at his house."

"But not yet ratified, and your engagement he has told you will be signed to-morrow."

"Do you think I shall sign the first? Oh, no! you have done well to put me on my guard. My name shall be written below yours."

"You swear it?"

"Oh, fie! Do you ask oaths for what you know so well? Truly you do not love me this evening, or you would not make me suffer by seeming to imagine that I did not love you."

At this thought Consuelo's eyes filled with tears, and she sat down with a pouting air, which rendered her charming. "I am a fool—an ass!" thought Anzoleto. "How could I for one instant suppose that the count could triumph over a soul so pure—an affection so full and entire? He is not so inexperienced as not to perceive at a glance that Consuelo is not for him, and he would not have been so generous as to offer me a place in his gondola, had he not known that he would have played the part of a fool there. No, no; my lot is well assured—my position unassailable. Let Consuelo please him or not, let him love, pay court to her—all that can only advance my fortunes, for she will soon learn to obtain what she wishes without incurring any danger. Consuelo will soon be better informed on this head than myself. She is prudent, she is energetic. The pretensions of the dear count will only turn to my profit and glory."

And thus abjuring all his doubts, he cast himself at the feet of his betrothed, and gave vent to that passionate enthusiasm which he now experienced for the first time, and which his jealousy had served for some hours to restrain.

"O my beauty—my saint—my queen!" he cried "excuse me for having thought of myself in place of prostrating myself before you, as I should have done, on finding myself again with you in this chamber. I left it this morning in anger with you. Yes, yes; I should have re-entered it upon my knees. How could you love and smile upon a brute like me? Strike me with your fan, Consuelo; place your pretty foot upon my neck. You are greater than I am by a hundredfold, and I am your slave for ever from this day."

"I do not deserve these fine speeches," said she, abandoning herself to his transports; "and I excuse your doubts because I comprehend them. It was the fear of being separated from me—of seeing our lot divided—which caused you all this unhappiness. You have failed in your faith in God, which is much worse than having accused me. But I shall pray for you, and say—'Lord, forgive as I forgive him.'"

While thus innocently and simply expressing her love, and mingling with it that Spanish feeling of devotion so full of human affection and ingenuous candour, Consuelo was beautiful. Anzoleto gazed on her with rapture.

"Oh, thou mistress of my soul!" he exclaimed, in a suffocated voice, "be mine for evermore!"

"When you will—to-morrow," said Consuelo, with a heavenly smile.

"To-morrow? and why to-morrow?"

"You are right; it is now past midnight—we may be married to-day. When the sun rises let us seek the priest. We have no friends, and the ceremony need not be long. I have the muslin dress which I have never yet worn. When I made it, dear Anzoleto, I said to myself—'Perhaps I may not have money to purchase my wedding dress, and if my friend should soon decide on marrying me, I would be obliged to wear one that I have had on already.' That, they say, is unlucky. So, when my mother appeared to me in a dream, to take it from me and lay it past, she knew what she did, poor soul! Therefore, by to-morrow's sun we shall swear at San Samuel fidelity for ever. Did you wish to satisfy yourself first, wicked one, that I was not ugly?"

"O Consuelo!" exclaimed Anzoleto, with anguish, "you are a child. We could not marry thus, from one day to another, without its being known. The count and Porpora, whose protection is so necessary to us, would be justly irritated if we took this step without consulting or even informing them. Your old master does not like me too well, and the count, as I know, does not care much for married singers. We cannot go to San Samuel, where everybody knows us, and where the first old woman we met would make the palace acquainted with it in half an hour. We must keep our union secret."

"No, Anzoleto," said Consuelo, "I cannot consent to so rash—so ill-advised a step. I did not think of the objections you have urged to a public marriage; but if they are well founded,

they apply with equal force to a private and clandestine one. It was not I who spoke first of it, Anzoleto, although I thought more than once that we were old enough to be married; yet it seemed right to leave the decision to your prudence, and, if I must say it, to your wishes; for I saw very well that you were in no hurry to make me your wife, nor had I any desire to remind you. You have often told me that before settling ourselves, we must think of our future family, and secure the needful resources. My mother said the same, and it is only right. Thus, all things considered, it would be too soon. First, our engagement must be signed—is not that so?—then we must be certain of the good-will of the public. We can speak of all this after we make our debut. But why do you grow pale, Anzoleto? Why do you wring your hands? O Heavens! are we not happy? Does it need an oath to insure our mutual love and reliance?"

"O Consuelo! how calm you are!—how pure!—how cold!" exclaimed Anzoleto, with a sort of despair.

"Cold!" exclaimed the young Spaniard, stupified, and crimson with indignation. "God, who reads my heart, knows whether I love you!"

"Very well," retorted Anzoleto, angrily; "throw yourself into his bosom, for mine is no safe refuge; and I shall fly lest I become impious."

Thus saying he rushed towards the door, believing that Consuelo, who had hitherto never been able to separate from him in any quarrel however trifling, would hasten to prevent him; and in fact she made an impetuous movement as if to spring after him, then stopped, saw him go out, ran likewise to the door, and put her hand on the latch in order to call him back. But summoning up all her resolution by a superhuman effort, she fastened the bolt behind him, and then, overcome by the violent struggle she had undergone, she swooned away upon the floor, where she remained motionless till daybreak.

CHAPTER XV.

"I must confess that I am completely enchanted with her," said the Count Zustiniani to his friend Barberigo, as they conversed together on the balcony of his palace about two o'clock the same night.

"That is as much as to say that I must not be so," replied the young and brilliant Barberigo, "and I yield the point, for your rights take precedence of mine. Nevertheless, if Corilla should mesh you afresh in her nets, you will have the goodness to let me know, that I may try and win her ear."

"Do not think of it, if you love me. Corilla has never been other than a plaything. I see by your countenance that you are but mocking me."

"No, but I think that the amusement is somewhat serious

which causes us to commit such follies and incur such expense."

"I admit that I pursue my pleasures with so much ardour that I spare no expense to prolong them; but in this case it is more than fancy—it is passion which I feel. I never saw a creature so strangely beautiful as this Consuelo: she is like a lamp that pales from time to time, but which at the moment when it is apparently about to expire, sheds so bright a light that the very stars are eclipsed."

"Ah!" said Barberigo, sighing, "that little black dress and white collar, that slender and half devout toilet, that pale, calm, face at first so little striking, that frank address and astonishing absence of coquetry—all become transformed, and, as it were, grow divine when inspired by her own lofty genius of song. Happy Zustiniani, who hold in your hands the destinies of this dawning star!"

"Would I were secure of the happiness which you envy! But I am discouraged when I find none of those passions with which I am acquainted, and which are so easy to bring into play. Imagine, friend, that this girl remains an enigma to me even after a whole day's study of her. It would almost seem from her tranquillity and my awkwardness, that I am already so far gone that I cannot see clearly."

"Truly you are captivated, since you already grow blind. I, whom hope does not confuse, can tell you in three words what you do not understand. Consuelo is the flower of innocence; she loves the little Anzoleto, and will love him yet for some time; but if you affront this attachment of childhood, you will only give it fresh strength. Appear to consider it of no importance, and the comparison which she will not fail to make between you and him will not fail to cool her preference."

"But the rascal is as handsome as Apollo; he has a magnificent voice, and must succeed. Corilla is already crazy about him; he is not one to be despised by a girl who has eyes."

"But he is poor, and you are rich—he is unknown, and you are powerful. The needful thing is to find out whether they are merely betrothed, or whether a more intimate connexion binds them. In the latter case Consuelo's eyes will be soon opened; in the former there will be a struggle and uncertainty which will but prolong her anguish."

"I must then desire what I horribly fear, and which maddens me with rage when I think of it. What do you suppose?"

"I think they are merely betrothed."

"But it is impossible. He is a bold and ardent youth, and then the manners of those people!"

"Consuelo is in all respects a prodigy. You have had experience to little purpose, dear Zustiniani, if you do not see in all the movements, all the looks, all the words of this girl, that she is pure as the ocean gem."

"You transport me with joy."

"Take care—it is folly, prejudice. If you love Consuelo, she must be married to-morrow, so that in eight days her master may make her feel the weight of her chain, the torments of jealousy, the *ennui* of a troublesome, unjust, and faithless guardian; for the handsome Anzoleto will be all that. I could not observe him yesterday between Consuelo and Clorinda without being able to prophesy her wrongs and misfortunes. Follow my advice, and you will thank me. The bond of marriage is easy to unloose between people of that condition, and you know that with women love is an ardent fancy which only increases with obstacles."

"You drive me to despair," replied the count; "nevertheless, I feel that you are right."

Unhappily for the designs of Count Zustiniani, this dialogue had a listener upon whom they did not reckon, and who did not lose one syllable of it. After quitting Consuelo, Anzoleto, stung with jealousy, had come to prowl about the palace of his protector, in order to assure himself that the count did not intend one of those forcible abductions then so much in vogue, and for which the patricians had almost entire impunity. He could hear no more, for the moon, which just then rose over the roofs of the palace, began to cast his shadow on the pavement, and the two young lords, perceiving that a man was under the balcony, withdrew and closed the window.

Anzoleto disappeared in order to ponder at his leisure on what he had just heard; it was quite enough to direct him what course to take in order to profit by the virtuous counsels of Barberigo to his friend. He slept scarcely two hours, and immediately when he awoke, ran to the Corte Minelli. The door was still locked, but through the chinks he could see Consuelo, dressed, stretched on the bed and sleeping, pale and motionless as death. The coolness of the morning had roused her from her swoon, and she threw herself on the bed without having strength to undress. He stood for some moments looking at her with remorseful disquietude, but at last becoming uneasy at this heavy sleep, so contrary to the active habits of his betrothed, he gently enlarged an opening through which he could pass his knife and slide back the bolt. This occasioned some noise; but Consuelo, overcome with fatigue, was not awakened. He then entered, knelt down beside her couch, and remained thus until she awoke. On finding him there Consuelo uttered a cry of joy, but instantly taking away her arms which she had thrown round his neck, she drew back with an expression of alarm.

"You dread me now, and instead of embracing, fly me," said he with grief. "Oh, I am cruelly punished for my fault; pardon me, Consuelo, and see if you have ever cause to mistrust your friend again. I have watched you sleeping for a whole hour; pardon me, sister—it is the first and last time you shall have to blame or repulse your brother; I shall never more offend you by my hastiness and ill-temper. Leave me, banish

me, if I fail in my oath. Are you satisfied, dear and good Consuelo?"

Consuelo only replied by pressing the fair head of the Venetian to her heart and bathing it with tears. This outburst comforted her; and soon after falling back upon her pillow, "I confess," said she, "that I am overcome; I hardly slept all night, we parted so unhappily."

"Sleep, Consuelo; sleep, dear angel," replied Anzoleto. "Do you remember the night that you allowed me to sleep on your couch, while you worked and prayed at your little table? It is now my turn to watch and protect you. Sleep, my child: I shall turn over your music and read it to myself whilst you repose an hour or two; no one will disturb us before the evening. Sleep, then, and prove by this confidence that you pardon and trust me."

Consuelo replied by a heavenly smile. He kissed her forehead and placed himself at the table, while she enjoyed a refreshing sleep, mingled with sweet dreams.

Anzoleto had lived calmly and innocently too long with this young girl, to render it difficult after one day's agitation to regain his usual demeanour. This brotherly feeling was, as it were, the ordinary condition of his soul; besides, what he had heard the preceding night under the balcony of Zustiniani, was well calculated to strengthen his faltering purpose. "Thanks, my bravo gentlemen," said he to himself; "you have given me a lesson which the *rascal* will turn to account just as much as one of your own class. I shall abstain from jealousy, infidelity, or any weakness which may give you an advantage over me. Illustrious and profound Barberigo! your prophecies bring counsel; it is good to be of your school."

Thus reflecting, Anzoleto, overcome by a sleepless night, dozed in his turn, his head supported on his hand and his elbows on the table; but his sleep was not sound, and the daylight had begun to decline as he rose to see if Consuelo still slumbered. The rays of the setting sun streaming through the window, cast a glorious purple tinge on the old bed and its beautiful occupant. Her white mantilla she had made into a curtain, which was secured to a filagree crucifix nailed to the wall above her head. Her veil fell gracefully over her well-proportioned and admirable figure; and, bathed in this rose-coloured light as a flower which closes its leaves together at the approach of evening, her long tresses falling upon her white shoulders, her hands crossed on her bosom as a saint on her marble tomb, she looked so chaste and heavenly that Anzoleto mentally exclaimed, "Ah, Count Zustiniani, that you could see her this moment, and behold the prudent and jealous guardian of a treasure you vainly covet, beside her!"

At this moment a faint noise was heard outside, and Anzoleto, whose faculties were kept on the stretch, thought he recognized the splashing of water at the foot of Consuelo's ruined dwelling, although gondolas rarely approached the

Corte Minelli. He mounted on a chair, and was by this means able to see through a sort of loop-hole near the ceiling, which looked towards the canal. He distinctly saw Count Zustiniani leave his bark, and question the half-naked children who played on the beach. He was uncertain whether he should awaken his betrothed or close the door; but, during the ten minutes which the count occupied in finding out the garret of Consuelo, he had time to regain the utmost self-possession and to leave the door ajar, so that any one might enter without noise or hindrance; then reseating himself, he took a pen and pretended to write music. He appeared perfectly calm and tranquil, although his heart beat violently.

The count slipped in, rejoicing in the idea of surprising his protegée, whose obvious destitution he conceived would favour his corrupt intentions. He brought Consuelo's engagement ready signed along with him, and he thought with such a passport his reception could not be very discouraging; but at the first sight of the strange sanctuary in which this sweet girl slept her angelic sleep under the watchful eye of her contented lover, Count Zustiniani lost his presence of mind, entangled his cloak which he had thrown with a conquering air over his shoulders, and stopped between the bed and the table, utterly uncertain whom he should address. Anzoleto was revenged for the scene at the entrance of the gondola.

"My lord," he exclaimed, rising as if surprised by an unexpected visit, "shall I awaken my betrothed?"

"No," replied the count, already at his ease, and affecting to turn his back that he might contemplate Consuelo; "I am so happy to see her thus, I forbid you to awaken her."

"Yes, you may look at her," thought Anzoleto; "it is all I wished for."

Consuelo did not awaken, and the count, speaking in a low tone and assuming a gracious and tranquil aspect, expressed his admiration without restraint. "You were right, Zoto," said he with an easy air; "Consuelo is the first singer in Italy, and I was wrong to doubt that she was the most beautiful woman in the world."

"Your highness thought her frightful, however," said Anzoleto, maliciously.

"You have doubtless complained to her of all my folly; but I reserve to myself the pleasure of obtaining pardon by so honourable and complete an apology that you shall not again be able to injure me in recalling my errors."

"Injure you, Signor Count!—how could I do so even had I the wish?"

Consuelo moved. "Let us not awaken her too suddenly," said the count, "and clear this table that I may place on it and read, her engagement. Hold!" said he when Anzoleto had obeyed him; "cast your eyes over this paper while we wait for hers to open."

"An engagement before trial!—it is magnificent, my noble

patron. And she is to appear at once, before Corilla's engagement has expired?"

"That is nothing; there is some trilling debt of a thousand sequins or so due her, which we shall pay off."

"But what if Corilla should cabal?"

"We will confine her under the leads."

"'Fore Heaven! nothing stops your highness."

"Yes, Zoto," replied the count coldly; "thus it is: what we desire we do, towards one and all."

"And the conditions are the same as for Corilla—the same conditions for a débutante without name or reputation as for an illustrious performer adored by the public!"

"The new singer shall have even more; and if the conditions granted her predecessor do not satisfy her, she has only to say a word and they shall be doubled. Everything depends upon herself," continued he, raising his voice a little as he perceived that Consuelo was awake: "her fate is in her own hands."

Consuelo had heard all this partially, through her sleep. When she had rubbed her eyes and assured herself that she was not dreaming, she slid down into the space between the bed and the wall, without considering the strangeness of her position, and after arranging her hair, came forward with ingenuous confidence to join in the conversation.

"Signor Count," said she, "you are only too good; but I am not so presumptuous as to avail myself of your offer. I will not sign this engagement until I have made a trial of my powers before the public. It would not be delicate on my part. I might not please—I might incur a *fiasco* and be hissed. Even should I be hoarse or unprepared, or even ugly that day, your word would be still pledged—you would be too proud to take it back and I to avail myself of it."

"Ugly on that day, Consuelo!—you ugly!" said the count, looking at her with burning glances; "come now," he added, taking her by the hand and leading her to the mirror, "look at yourself there. If you are adorable in this costume, what would you be, covered with diamonds and radiant with triumph?"

The count's impertinence made Anzoleto gnash his teeth; but the calm indifference with which Consuelo received his compliments restrained his impatience. "Sir," said she, pushing back the fragment of looking-glass which he held in his hand, "do not break my mirror; it is the only one I ever had, and it has never deceived me. Ugly or pretty, I refuse your liberality; and I may tell you frankly that I shall not appear unless my betrothed be similarly engaged. I will have no other theatre nor any other public except his: we cannot be separate, being engaged to each other."

This abrupt declaration took the count a little unawares, but he soon regained his equanimity.

"You are right, Consuelo," replied he; "I never intended to separate you: Zoto shall appear with yourself. At the same

time I cannot conceal from you that his talents, although remarkable, are much inferior to yours."

"I do not believe it, my lord," said Consuelo, blushing as if she had received a personal insult.

"I hear that he is your pupil, much more than that of the maestro I gave him. Do not deny it, beautiful Consuelo. On learning your intimacy, Porpora exclaimed, 'I am no longer astonished at certain qualities he possesses, which I was unable to reconcile with his defects.'"

"Thanks to the Signor Professor," said Anzoleto with a forced smile.

"He will change his mind," said Consuelo gaily—"besides, the public will contradict this dear good master."

"The good dear master is the best judge of music in the world," replied the count. "Anzoleto will do well to profit by your lessons; but we cannot arrange the terms of his agreement before we have ascertained the sentiments of the public. Let him make his appearance, and we shall settle with him according to justice and our own favourable feeling towards him, on which he has every reason to rely."

"Then let us both make our appearance," replied Consuelo; "but no signature—no agreement before trial; on that I am determined."

"You are not satisfied with my terms, Consuelo; very well, then you shall dictate them yourself; here is the pen—add—take away—my signature is below."

Consuelo seized the pen; Anzoleto turned pale, and the count, who observed him, chewed with pleasure the end of the ruffle which he twisted in his fingers. Consuelo erased the contract and wrote upon the portion remaining above the signature of the count—

"Anzoleto and Consuelo severally agree to such conditions as it shall please Count Zustiniani to impose after their first appearance, which shall take place during the ensuing month at the theatre of San Samuel."

She signed rapidly, and passed the pen to her lover.

"Sign without looking," said she. "You can do no less to prove your gratitude, and your confidence in your benefactor."

Anzoleto had glanced over it in a twinkling: he signed—it was but the work of a moment. The count read over his shoulder.

"Consuelo," said he, "you are a strange girl—in truth an admirable creature. You will both dine with me," he continued, tearing the contract and offering his hand to Consuelo, who accepted it, but at the same time requested him to wait with Anzoleto in his gondola while she should arrange her toilet.

"Decidedly," said she to herself when alone, "I shall be able to buy a new marriage robe." She then arranged her muslin dress, settled her hair, and flew down the stairs singing with a voice full of freshness and vigour. The count, with excess of courtesy, had waited for her with Anzoleto at the foot of the

stair. She believed him further off, and almost fell into his arms, but suddenly disengaging herself, she took his hand and carried it to her lips, after the fashion of the country, with the respect of an inferior who does not wish to infringe upon the distinctions of rank; then turning, she clasped her betrothed, and bounded with joyous steps towards the gondola, without awaiting the ceremonious escort of her somewhat mortified protector.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE count seeing that Consuelo was insensible to the stimulus of gain, tried to flatter her vanity by offering her jewels and ornaments; but these she refused. Zustiniani at first imagined that she was aware of his secret intentions; but he soon saw that it was but a species of rustic pride, and that she would receive no recompense until she conceived she had earned it by working for the prosperity of his theatre. He obliged her however to accept a white satin dress, observing that she could not appear with propriety in her muslin robe in his saloon, and adding that he would consider it a favour if she would abandon the attire of the people. She submitted her fine figure to the fashionable milliners, who turned it to good account, and did not spare the material. Thus transformed in two days into a woman of the world, and induced to accept a necklace of fine pearls which the count presented to her as payment for the evening when she sang before him and his friends, she was beautiful, if not according to her own peculiar style of beauty, at least as she should be to be admired by the vulgar. This result however was not perfectly attained. At the first glance Consuelo neither struck nor dazzled anybody; she was always pale, and her modest, studious habits took from her look that brilliant glance which we witness in the eyes of women whose only object is to shine. The basis of her character, as well as the distinguishing peculiarity of her countenance, was a reflective seriousness. One might see her eat, and talk, and weary herself with the trivial concerns of daily life, without even supposing that she was pretty; but once the smile of enjoyment, so easily allied to serenity of soul, came to light up her features, how charming she became! And when she was further animated—when she interested herself seriously in the business of the piece—when she displayed tenderness, exaltation of mind, the manifestation of her inward life and hidden power—she shone resplendent with all the fire of genius and love, she was another being, the audience were hurried away—passion-stricken as it were—annihilated at pleasure—without her being able to explain the mystery of her power.

What the count experienced for her therefore astonished and annoyed her strangely. There were in this man of the world artistic chords which had never yet been struck, and which she caused to thrill with unknown emotions; but this revelation could not penetrate the patrician's soul sufficiently to enable

him to discern the impotence and poverty of the means by which he attempted to lead away a woman so different from those he had hitherto endeavoured to corrupt.

He took patience and determined to try the effects of emulation. He conducted her to his box in the theatre that she might witness Corilla's success, and that ambition might be awakened in her; but the result was quite different from what might have been anticipated. Consuelo left the theatre, cold, silent, fatigued, and in no way excited by the noise and applause. Corilla was deficient in solid talent, noble sentiment, and well-founded power; and Consuelo felt quite competent to form an opinion of this forced, factitious, talent, already vitiated at its source by selfishness and excess. She applauded unconsciously, uttered words of formal approval, and disdained to put on a mask of enthusiasm for one whom she could neither fear nor admire. The count for a moment thought her under the influence of secret jealousy of the talents, or at least of the person, of the prima donna. "This is nothing," said he, "to the triumphs which you will achieve when you appear before the public as you have already appeared before me. I hope that you are not frightened by what you see."

"No, Signor Count," replied Consuelo, smiling; "the public frightens me not, for I never think of it. I only think of what might be realized in the part which Corilla fills in so brilliant a manner, but in which there are many defects which she does not perceive."

"What! you do not think of the public?"

"No; I think of the piece, of the intentions of the composer, of the spirit of the part, and of the good qualities and defects of the orchestra, from the former of which we are to derive advantage, while we are to conceal the latter by a louder intonation at certain parts. I listen to the choruses, which are not always satisfactory, and require a more strict direction; I examine the passages on which all one's strength is required, and also those of course where it may advantageously be reserved. You will perceive, Signor Count, that I have many things to think of besides the public, who knows nothing about all that I have mentioned, and can teach me nothing."

This grave judgment and serious inquiry so surprised Zustiniani that he could not utter a single question, and asked himself, with some trepidation, what hold a gallant like himself could have on a genius of this stamp.

The appearance of the two débutants was preceded by all the usual inflated announcements; and this was the source of continual discussion and difference of opinion between the Count and Porpora, Consuelo and her lover. The old master and his pupil blamed the quack announcements and all those thousand unworthy tricks which have driven us so far into folly and bad faith. In Venice during those days the journals had not much to say as to public affairs; they did not concern themselves with the composition of the audience; they were

unaware of the deep resources of public advertisements, the gossip of biographical announcements, and the powerful machinery of hired applause. There was plenty of bribing and not a few cabals, but all this was concocted in coteries, and brought about through the instrumentality of the public, warmly attached to one side or sincerely hostile to the other. Art was not always the moving spring; passions great and small, foreign alike to art and talent, then as now, came to do battle in the temple; but they were not so skilful in concealing these sources of discord, and in laying them to the account of pure love for art. At bottom, indeed, it was the same vulgar, worldly spirit, with a surface less complicated by civilization.

Zustiniani managed these affairs more as a nobleman than as the conductor of a theatre. His ostentation was a more powerful impulse than the avarice of ordinary speculators. He prepared the public in his saloons, and warmed up his representations beforehand. His conduct it is true was never cowardly or mean, but it bore the puerile stamp of self-love, a busy gallantry, and the pointed gossip of good society. He therefore proceeded to demolish, piece by piece, with considerable art, the edifice so lately raised by his own hands to the glory of Corilla. Everybody saw that he wanted to set up in its place the miracle of talent; and as the exclusive possession of this wonderful phenomenon was ascribed to him, poor Consuelo never suspected the nature of his intentions towards her, although all Venice knew that the count, disgusted with the conduct of Corilla, was about to introduce in her place another singer; while many added, "Grand mystification for the public, and great prejudice to the theatre; for his favourite is a little street singer, who has nothing to recommend her except her fine voice and tolerable figure."

Hence arose fresh cabals for Corilla, who went about playing the part of an injured rival, and who implored her extensive circle of adorers and their friends to do justice to the insolent pretensions of the *zingarella*. Hence also new cabals in favour of Consuelo, by a numerous party, who, although differing widely on other subjects, united in a wish to mortify Corilla and elevate her rival in her place.

As to the veritable dilettanti of music, they were equally divided between the opinion of the serious masters—such as Porpora, Marcello, and Jomelli, who predicted with the appearance of an excellent musician, the return of the good old usages and casts of performance—and the anger of second-rate composers, whose compositions Corilla had always preferred, and who now saw themselves threatened with neglect in her person. The orchestra, dreading to set to work on scores which had been long laid aside, and which consequently would require study, all those retainers of the theatre, who in every thorough reform always foresaw an entire change of the performers, even the very scene-shifters, the tirewomen, and the hairdressers—all were in movement for or against the débutante

at San Samuel. In point of fact the début was much more in everybody's thoughts than the new administration or the acts of the Doge, Pietro Grimaldi, who had just then peaceably succeeded his predecessor Luigi Pisani.

Consuelo was exceedingly distressed at these delays and the petty quarrels connected with her new career; she would have wished to come out at once, without any other preparation than what concerned herself and the study of the new piece. She understood nothing of those endless intrigues which seemed to her more dangerous than useful, and which she felt she could very well dispense with. But the count, who saw more clearly into the secrets of his profession and who wished to be envied his imaginary happiness, spared nothing to secure partisans, and made her come every day to his palace to be presented to all the aristocracy of Venice. Consuelo's modesty and reluctance ill supported his designs; but he induced her to sing, and the victory was at once decisive—brilliant—incontestible.

Anzoleto was far from sharing the repugnance of his betrothed for these secondary means. His success was by no means so certain as hers. In the first place the count was not so ardent in his favour, and the tenor whom he was to succeed was a man of talent, who would not be easily forgotten. It is true he also sang nightly at the count's palace, and Consuelo in their duets brought him out admirably; so that, urged and sustained by the magic of a genius superior to his own, he often attained great heights. He was on these occasions both encouraged and applauded; but when the first surprise excited by his fine voice was over, more especially when Consuelo had revealed herself, his deficiency was apparent and frightened even himself. This was the time to work with renewed vigour; but in vain Consuelo exhorted him and appointed him to meet her each morning in the Corte Minelli—where she persisted in remaining spite of the remonstrances of the Count, who wished to establish her more suitably—Anzoleto had so much to do—so many visits, engagements, and intrigues on hand—such distracting anxieties to occupy his mind—that neither time nor courage was left for study.

In the midst of these perplexities, seeing that the greatest opposition would be given by Corilla, and also that the count no longer gave himself any trouble about her, Anzoleto resolved to visit her himself in order to deprecate her hostility. As may easily be conceived, she had pretended to take the matter very lightly, and treated the neglect and contempt of Zustiniani with philosophical unconcern. She mentioned and boasted everywhere that she had received brilliant offers from the Italian opera at Paris, and calculating on the reverse which she thought awaited her rival, laughed outright at the illusions of the count and his party. Anzoleto thought that with prudence and by employing a little deceit, he might disarm this formidable enemy; and having perfumed and

adorned himself, he waited on her at one in the afternoon—an hour when the siesta renders visits unusual and the palaces silent.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANZOLETO found Corilla alone in a charming boudoir, reclining on a couch in a becoming undress; but the alteration in her features by daylight, led him to suspect that her security with regard to Consuelo was not so great as her faithful partisans asserted. Nevertheless she received him with an easy air, and tapping him playfully on the cheek, while she made a sign to her servant to withdraw, exclaimed—"Ah, wicked one, is it you?—are you come with your tales, or would you make me believe you are no dealer in flourishes, nor the most intriguing of all the postulants for fame? You were somewhat conceited, my handsome friend, if you supposed that I should be disheartened by your sudden flight after so many tender declarations; and still more conceited was it to suppose that you were wanted, for in four-and-twenty hours I had forgotten that such a person existed.

"Four-and twenty hours!—that is a long time," replied Anzoleto, kissing the plump and rounded arm of Corilla. "Ah! if I believed that, I should be proud indeed; but I know that if I was so far deceived as to believe you when you said—"

"What I said, I advise you to forget also. Had you called you would have found my door shut against you. What assurance to come to-day!"

"Is it not good taste to leave those who are in favour, and to lay one's heart and devotion at the feet of her who—"

"Well, finish—to her who is in disgrace. It is most generous and humane on your part, most illustrious friend!" And Corilla fell back upon the satin pillow with a burst of shrill and forced laughter.

Although the disgraced prima donna was no longer in her early freshness—although the mid-day sun was not much in her favour, and although vexation had somewhat taken from the effect of her full-formed features—Anzoleto, who had never been on terms of intimacy with a woman so brilliant and so renowned, felt himself moved in regions of the soul to which Consuelo had never descended, and whence he had voluntarily banished her pure image. He therefore palliated the raillery of Corilla by a profession of love which he had only intended to feign, but which he now actually began to experience. I say love for want of a better word, for it were to profane the name to apply it to the attraction awakened by such women as Corilla. When she saw the young tenor really moved, she grew milder, and addressed him after a more amiable fashion.

"I confess," said she, "you selected me for a whole evening, but I did not altogether esteem you. I know you are ambitious, and consequently false, and ready for every treason. I

dare not trust to you. You pretended to be jealous on a certain night in my gondola, and took upon you the airs of a despot. That might have disenchanted me with the insipid gallantries of our patricians, but you deceived me, ungrateful one! you were engaged to another, and are going to marry—whom?—oh, I know very well—my rival, my enemy, the debutante, the new protegée of Zustiniani. Shame upon us two—upon us three—upon us all!" added she, growing animated in spite of herself, and withdrawing her hand from Anzoleto.

"Cruel creature!" he exclaimed, trying to regain her fair fingers, "you ought to understand what passed in my heart when I first saw you, and not busy yourself with what occupied me before that terrible moment. As to what happened since, can you not guess it, and is there any necessity to recur to the subject?"

"I am not to be put off with half words and reservations: do you love the *zingarella*, and are you about to marry her?"

"And if I loved her, how does it happen I did not marry her before?"

"Perhaps the count would have opposed it. Every one knows what he wants now. They even say that he has ground for impatience, and the little one still more so."

The colour mounted to Anzoleto's face when he heard language of this sort applied to the being whom he venerated above all others.

"Ah, you are angry at my supposition," said Corilla; "it is well—that is what I wished to find out. You love her. When will the marriage take place?"

"For the love of Heaven, madam, let us speak of nobody except ourselves."

"Agreed," replied Corilla. "So, my former lover and your future spouse——".

Anzoleto was enraged; he rose to go away, but what was he to do? Should he enrage still more the woman whom he had come to pacify? He remained undecided, dreadfully humiliated, and unhappy at the part he had imposed on himself.

Corilla eagerly desired to win his affections, not because she loved him, but because she wished to be revenged on Consuelo, whom she had abused without being certain that her insinuations were well founded.

"You see," said she, arresting him on the threshold with a peretrating look, "that I have reason to doubt you; for at this moment you are deceiving some one—either her or myself."

"Neither one nor the other," replied he, endeavouring to justify himself in his own eyes. "I am not her lover, and I never was so. I am not in love with her, for I am not jealous of the count."

"Oh! indeed? You are jealous, even to the point of denying it, and you come here to cure yourself or distract your attention from a subject so unpleasant. Many thanks!"

"I am not jealous, I repeat; and to prove that it is not mortification which makes me speak, I tell you that the count is no more her lover than I am; that she is virtuous, child as she is, and that the only one guilty towards you is Count Zustiniani."

"So, so; then I may hiss the *zingarella* without afflicting you. You shall be in my box on the night of her debut, and you shall hiss her. Your obedience shall be the price of my favour—take me at my word, or I draw back."

"Alas! madam, you wish to prevent me appearing myself, for you know I am to do so at the same time as Consuelo. If you hiss her, I shall fall a victim to your wrath, because I shall sing with her. And what have I done, wretch that I am, to displease you? Alas! I had a delicious but fatal dream. I thought for a whole evening that you took an interest in me, and that I should grow great under your protection. Now I am the object of your hatred and anger—I, who have so loved and respected you as to fly you! Very well, madam; satiate your enmity. Overthrow me—ruin me—close my career. So that you can here tell me, in secret, that I am not hateful to you, I shall accept the public marks of your anger."

"Serpent!" exclaimed Corilla, "where have you imbibed the poison which your tongue and your eyes distil? Much would I give to know, to comprehend you, for you are the most amiable of lovers and the most dangerous of enemies."

"I your enemy! how could I be so, even were I not subdued by your charms? Have you enemies then, divine Corilla? Can you have them in Venice, where you are known and where you rule over no divided empire? A love quarrel throws the count into despair; he would remove you, since thereby he would cease to suffer. He meets a little creature in his path who appears to display resources, and who only asks to be heard. Is this a crime on the part of a poor child, who only hears your name with terror, and who never utters it herself without respect? And you ascribe to this little one insolent pretensions which she does not entertain. The efforts of the count to recommend her to his friends, the kindness of these friends, who exaggerate her deserts, the bitterness of yours, who spread calumnies which serve but to annoy and vex you, whilst they should but calm your soul in picturing to you your glory unassailable and your rival all trembling—these are the prejudices which I discover in you, and at which I am so confounded that I hardly know how to assail them."

"You know but too well, with that flattering tongue of yours," said Corilla, looking at him with tenderness mixed with distrust; "I hear the honied words which reason bids me disclaim. I wager that this Consuelo is divinely beautiful, whatever may have been said to the contrary, and that she has merits, though opposed to mine, since the severe Porpora has proclaimed them."

"You know Porpora; you know all his crotchety ideas. An

enemy of all originality in others, and of every innovation in the art of song, he declares a little pupil, who listens to his dotage, submissive to his pedantry, and who runs over the scale decently, to be preferable to all the wonders which the public adores. How long have you tormented yourself about this crazy old fool?"

"She afraid? I was told, on the contrary, that she was gifted with rare impudence."

"Alas, poor girl! they do wish to ruin her then. You shall hear her, noble Corilla; you will be moved by a generous pity, and you will encourage instead of hissing her as you said just now in jest."

"Either you deceive me, or my friends have greatly deceived me with regard to her."

"Your friends have allowed themselves to be deceived. In their indiscreet zeal they have been terrified at seeing a rival raised up against you—terrified by a child!—terrified for you! Ah! those persons cannot love you much, since they appreciate you so little. Oh! if I had the happiness to be your friend, I should know better what you are, and I should not do you the injustice to be affrighted by any rivalry, were it even that of a Faustina or a Molteni."

"Do not believe that I have been frightened. I am neither jealous nor malicious: the success of others having never injured mine, I have never troubled myself about them. But when I think that they endeavour to brave me and to make me suffer—"

"Do you wish me to bring the little Consuelo to your feet? If she had dared, she would already have come to ask your advice and your assistance. But she is so timid a child! and then they had calumniated you to her. They said to her also that you were cruel, vindictive, and that you reckoned confidently on her fall."

"Did they say that? Then I understand why you are here."

"No, madam, you do not understand; for I did not believe it an instant—I never shall believe it. Oh no, madam! you do not understand why."

In speaking thus, Anzoleto made his black eyes sparkle, and bent his knee before Corilla with an expression of profound respect and love.

"She is without talent then?"

"Why, she has a passable voice, and sings decently at church, but she can know nothing of the theatre; and besides, she is so paralyzed with fear, that it is much to be dreaded she will lose the few resources that Heaven has given her."

Corilla was destitute neither of acuteness nor ill-nature; but as happens to women excessively taken with themselves, vanity sealed her eyes and precipitated her into the clumsy trap.

She thought she had nothing to apprehend as regarded Anzoleto's sentiments for the débutante. When he justified himself, and swore by all the gods that he had never loved this

young girl, save as a brother should love, he told the truth, and there was so much confidence in his manner that Corilla's jealousy was overcome. At length the great day approached, and the cabal was annihilated. Corilla, on her part, thenceforth went on in a different direction, fully persuaded that the timid and inexperienced Consuelo would not succeed, and that Anzoleto would owe her an infinite obligation for having contributed nothing to her downfall. Besides, he had the address to embroil her with her firmest champions, pretending to be jealous, and obliging her to dismiss them rather rudely.

Whilst he thus laboured in secret to blast the hopes of a woman whom he pretended to love, the cunning Venetian played another game with the count and Consuelo. He boasted to them of having disarmed this most formidable enemy by dexterous management, interested visits, and bold falsehoods. The count, frivolous and somewhat of a gossip, was extremely amused by the stories of his protegé. His self-love was flattered at the regret which Corilla was said to experience on account of their quarrel, and he urged on this young man, with the levity which one witnesses in affairs of love and gallantry, to the commission of cowardly perfidy. Consuelo was astonished and distressed. "You would do better," said she, "to exercise your voice and study your part. You think you have done much in propitiating the enemy, but a single false note, a movement badly expressed, would do more against you with the impartial public than the silence of the envious. It is of this public that you should think, and I see with pain that you are thinking nothing about it."

"Be calm, little Consuelo," said he; "your error is to believe a public at once impartial and enlightened. Those best acquainted with the matter are hardly ever in earnest, and those who are in earnest know so little about it, that it only requires boldness to dazzle and lead them away."

CHAPTER XVIII.

In the midst of the anxieties awakened by the desire of success and by the ardour of Corilla, the jealousy of Anzoleto with regard to the count slumbered. Happily Consuelo did not need a more watchful or more moral protector. Secure in innocence, she avoided the advances of Zustiniani, and kept him at a distance precisely by caring nothing about it. At the end of a fortnight this Venetian libertine acknowledged that she had none of those worldly passions which lead to corruption, though he spared no pains to make them spring up. But even in this respect he had advanced no farther than the first day, and he feared to ruin his hopes by pressing them too openly. Had Anzoleto annoyed him by keeping watch, anger might have caused him to precipitate matters; but Anzoleto left him at perfect liberty. Consuelo distrusted nothing, and he only tried to make himself agreeable, hoping in time to become necessary to her.

There was no sort of delicate attentions, or refined gallantries, that he omitted. Consuelo placed them all to the account of the liberal and elegant manners of his class, united with a love for art and a natural goodness of disposition. She displayed towards him an unfeigned regard, a sacred gratitude, while he, happy and yet dissatisfied with this pure-hearted unreserve, began to grow uneasy at the sentiment which he inspired until such period as he might wish to break the ice.

While he gave himself up with fear, and yet not without satisfaction, to this new feeling—consoling himself a little for his want of success by the opinion which all Venice entertained of his triumph—Corilla experienced the same transformation in herself. She loved with ardour, if not with devotion; and her irritable and imperious soul bent beneath the yoke of her young Adonis. It was truly the queen of beauty in love with the beautiful hunter, and for the first time humble and timid before the mortal of her choice. She affected, with a sort of delight, virtues which she did not possess. So true it is that the extinction of self-idolatry in favour of another, tends to raise and ennoble, were it but for an instant, hearts the least susceptible of pure emotions.

The emotion which she experienced reacted on her talents, and it was remarked at the theatre that she performed pathetic parts more naturally and with greater sensibility. But as her character and the essence of her nature were thus as it seemed inverted, as it required a sort of internal convulsion to effect this change, her bodily strength gave way in the combat, and each day they observed—some with malicious joy, others with serious alarm—the failure of her powers. Her brilliant execution was impeded by shortness of breath and false intonations. The annoyance and terror which she experienced, weakened her still further, and at the representation which took place previous to the début of Consuelo, she sang so false, and failed in so many brilliant passages, that her friends applauded faintly, and were soon reduced to silence and consternation by the murmurs of her opponents.

At length the great day arrived: the house was filled to suffocation. Corilla, attired in black, pale, agitated, more dead than alive, divided between the fear of seeing her lover condemned and her rival triumph, was seated in the recess of her little box in the theatre. Crowds of the aristocracy and beauty of Venice, tier above tier, made a brilliant display. The fops were crowded behind the scenes, and even in the front of the stage. The lady of the doge took her place along with the great dignitaries of the republic. Porpora directed the orchestra in person: and Count Zustiniani waited at the door of Consuelo's apartment till she had concluded her toilet, while Anzoleto, dressed as an antique warrior, with all the absurd and lavish ornament of the age, retired behind the scenes to swallow a draught of Cyprus wine, in order to restore his courage.

The opera was neither of the classic period nor yet the work of an innovator. It was the unknown production of a stranger. To escape the cabals which his own name or that of any other celebrated person would have caused, Porpora, above all things anxious for the success of his pupil, had brought forward *Ipermnestra*, the lyrical production of a young German, who had enemies neither in Italy nor elsewhere, and who was styled simply Christopher Gluck.

When Anzoleto appeared on the stage a murmur of admiration burst forth. The tenor to whom he succeeded—an admirable singer, who had had the imprudence to continue on the boards till his voice became thin and age had changed his looks—was little regretted by an ungrateful public; and the fair sex, who listen oftener with their eyes than with their ears, were delighted to find, in place of a fat elderly man, a fine youth of twenty-four, fresh as a rose, fair as Phœbus, and formed as if Phidias himself had been the artist—a true son of the lagunes, *Bianco, crespo, e grassotto.*

He was too much agitated to sing his first air well, but his magnificent voice, his graceful attitudes, and some happy turns, sufficed to propitiate the audience and satisfy the ladies. The debutant had great resources; he was applauded threefold, and twice brought back before the scenes, according to the custom of Italy, and of Venice in particular.

Success gave him courage, and when he re-appeared with Ipermnestra, he was no longer afraid. But all the effect of this scene was for Consuelo. They only saw, only listened to her. They said to each other, "Look at her—yes, it is she!" "Who?—the Spaniard?" "Yes—the débutante, *l'amante del Zustiniani.*"

Consuelo entered, self-possessed and serious. Casting her eyes around she received the plaudits of the spectators with a propriety of manner equally devoid of humility and coquetry, and sang a recitative with so firm a voice, with accents so lofty, and a self-possession so victorious, that cries of admiration from the very first resounded from every part of the theatre. "Ah! the perfidious creature has deceived me," exclaimed Corilla, darting a terrible look towards Anzoleto, who could not resist raising his eyes to hers with an ill-disguised smile. She threw herself back upon her seat, and burst into tears.

Consuelo proceeded a little further; while old Lotti was heard muttering with his cracked voice from his corner, "*Amici miei, questo è un portento.*"

She sang a bravura, and was ten times interrupted. They shouted "Encore!" they recalled her to the stage seven times, amid thunders of applause. At length the furor of Venetian dilettantism displayed itself in all its ridiculous and absurd excess. "Why do they cry out thus?" said Consuelo, as she retired behind the scenes only to be brought back immediately by the vociferous applause of the pit. "One would think that they wished to stone me."

From that moment they paid but a secondary attention to Anzoleto. They received him very well indeed, because they were in a happy vein; but the indulgence with which they passed over the passages in which he failed, without immediately applauding those in which he succeeded, showed him very plainly, that however he might please the women, the noisy majority of males held him cheaply, and reserved their tempestuous applause for the prima donna. Not one among all those who had come with hostile intentions, ventured a murmur, and in truth there were not three among them who could withstand the irresistible inclination to applaud the wonder of the day.

The piece had the greatest success, although it was not listened to, and nobody was occupied with the music in itself. It was quite in the Italian style—graceful, touching, and gave no indication of the author of *Alcestes* and *Orpheus*. There were not many striking beauties to astonish the audience. After the first act, the German maestro was called for, with Anzoleto, the débutante, and Clorinda, who, thanks to the protection of Consuelo, had sung through the second part with a flat voice and an inferior tone, but whose beautiful arms propitiated the spectators—Rosalba, whom she had replaced, being very lean.

In the last act, Anzoleto, who secretly watched Corilla and perceived her increasing agitation, thought it prudent to seek her in her box, in order to avert any explosion. So soon as she perceived him she threw herself upon him like a tigress, bestowed several vigorous cuffs, the least of which was so smart as to draw blood, leaving a mark that red and white could not immediately cover. The angry tenor settled matters by a thrust on the breast, which threw the singer gasping into the arms of her sister Rosalba. "Wretch!—traitor!"—she murmured in a choking voice, "your Consuelo and you shall perish by my hand!"

"If you make a step, a movement, a single gesture, I will stab you in the face of Venice," replied Anzoleto, pale and with clenched teeth, while his faithful knife, which he knew how to use with all the dexterity of a man of the lagunes, gleamed before her eyes.

"He would do as he says," murmured the terrified Rosalba; "be silent—let us leave this; we are here in danger of our lives."

Although this tragi-comic scene had taken place after the manner of the Venetians, in a mysterious and rapid *sotto voce*, on seeing the débutant pass quickly behind the scenes to regain his box, his cheek hidden in his hand, they suspected some petty squabble. The hairdresser, who was called to adjust the curls of the Grecian prince and to plaster up his wound, related to the whole band of choristers that an amorous cat had sunk her claw into the face of the hero. The aforesaid barber was accustomed to this kind of wounds, and was

no new confidant of such adventures. The anecdote made the round of the stage, penetrated, no one knew how, into the body of the house, found its way into the orchestra, the boxes, and, with some additions, descended to the pit. They were not yet aware of the position of Anzoleto with regard to Corilla; but some had noticed his apparent devotion to Clorinda, and the general report was, that the *seconda donna*, jealous of the *prima donna*, had just blackened the eye and broken three teeth of the handsomest of tenors.

This was sad news for some, but an exquisite bit of scandal for the majority. They wondered if the representation would be put off, or whether the old tenor Stefanini should have to appear, roll in hand, to finish the part. The curtain rose, and everything was forgotten on seeing Consuelo appear, calm and sublime as at the beginning. Although her part was not extremely tragical, she made it so by the power of her acting and the expression of her voice. She called forth tears, and when the tenor re-appeared, the slight scratch only excited a smile; but this absurd incident prevented his success from being so brilliant, and all the glory of the evening was reserved for Consuelo, who was applauded to the last with frenzy.

After the play, they went to sup at the Palace Zustiniani, and Anzoleto forgot Corilla, whom he had shut up in her box, and who was forced to burst it open in order to leave it. In the tumult which always follows so successful a representation, her retreat was not noticed; but the next day, this broken door coincided so well with the torn face of Anzoleto, that the love affair, hitherto so carefully concealed, was made known.

Hardly was he seated at the sumptuous banquet which the count gave in honour of Consuelo, and while all the Venetian dilettanti handed to the triumphant actress sonnets and madrigals composed the evening before, when a valet slipped under his plate a little billet from Corilla, which he read aside, and which was to the following effect:—

"If you do not come to me this instant, I shall go to seek you openly, were you even at the end of the world—were you even at the feet of your Consuelo, thrice accursed!"

Anzoleto pretended to be seized with a fit of coughing, and retired to write an answer with a pencil on a piece of ruled paper which he had torn in the antechamber of the count from a music-book:—

"Come if you will. My knife is ready, and with it my scorn and hatred."

The despot was well aware that with such a creature fear was the only restraint—that threats were the only expedient at the moment; but in spite of himself he was gloomy and absent during the repast, and as soon as it was over he hurried off to go to Corilla.

He found the unhappy girl in a truly pitiable condition. Convulsions were followed by torrents of tears. She was seated at the window, her hair dishevelled, her eyes swollen with

weeping, and her dress disordered. She sent away her sister and maid, and in spite of herself, a ray of joy overspread her features, at finding herself with him whom she had feared she might never see again. But Anzoleto knew her too well to seek to comfort her. He knew that at the first appearance of pity or repentance he would see her fury revive, and seize upon revenge. He resolved to keep up the appearance of inflexible harshness; and although he was moved with her despair, he overwhelmed her with cruel reproaches, declaring that he was only come to bid her an eternal farewell. He suffered her to throw herself at his feet, to cling by his knees even to the door, and to implore his pardon in the anguish of grief. When he had thus subdued and humbled her, he pretended to be somewhat moved, and promising to return in the morning, he left her.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Anzoleto awoke the following morning, he experienced a reverse of the jealousy with which Count Zustiniani had inspired him. A thousand opposing sentiments divided his soul. First, that other jealousy which the genius and success of Consuelo had awakened in his bosom. This sank the deeper in his breast in proportion as he measured the triumph of his betrothed with what in his blighted ambition he was pleased to call his downfall. Again, the mortification of being supplanted in reality, as he was already thought to be, with her, now so triumphant and powerful, and of whom the preceding evening he was so pleased to believe himself the only lover. These two feelings possessed him by turns, and he knew not to which to give himself up, in order to extinguish the other. He had to choose between two things, either to remove Consuelo from the count and from Venice, and along with her to seek his fortune elsewhere, or to abandon her to his rival, and take his chance alone in some distant country with no drawback to his success. In this poignant uncertainty, in place of endeavouring to recover his calmness with his true friend, he returned to Corilla and plunged back into the storm. She added fuel to the flame, by showing him, in even stronger colours than he had imagined the preceding night, all the disadvantages of his position. "No person," said she, "is a prophet in his own country. This is a bad place for one who has been seen running about in rags, and where every one may say—(and God knows the nobles are sufficiently given to boast of the protection, even when it is only imaginary, which they accord to artists)—'I was his protector; I saw his hidden talent; it was I who recommended and gave him a preference.' You have lived too much in public here, my poor Anzoleto. Your charming features struck those who knew not what was in you. You astonished people who have seen you in their gondolas singing the stanzas of Tasso, or doing their errands to gain the

means of support. The plain Consuelo, leading a retired life, appears here as a strange wonder. Besides she is a Spaniard, and uses not the Venetian accent; and her agreeable, though somewhat singular pronunciation, would please them, even were it detestable. It is something of which their ears are not tired. Your good looks have contributed mainly to the slight success you obtained in the first act, but now people are accustomed to you."

"Do not forget to mention that the handsome scratch you gave me beneath the eye, and for which I ought never to pardon you, will go far to lessen the last-mentioned trifling advantage."

"On the contrary, it is a decided advantage in the eyes of women, but frivolous in those of men. You will reign in the saloons with the one party; without the other you would fall at the theatre. But how can you expect to occupy their attention, when it is a woman who disputes it with you—a woman who not only enthrals the serious dilettanti, but who intoxicates by her grace and the magic of her sex, all who are not connoisseurs in music. To struggle with me, how much talent did Stefanini, Savario—all indeed who have appeared with me on the stage require."

"In that case, dear Corilla, I should run as much risk in appearing with you as with Consuelo. If I were inclined to follow you to France, you have given me fair warning."

These words which escaped from Anzoleto were as a ray of light to Corilla. She saw that she had hit the mark more nearly than she had supposed, for the thought of leaving Venice had already dawned in the mind of her lover. The instant she conceived the idea of bearing him away with her, she spared no pains to make him relish the project. She humbled herself as much as she could, and even had the modesty to place herself below her rival. She admitted that she was not a great singer, nor yet sufficiently beautiful to attract the public; and as all this was even truer than she cared to think, and as Anzoleto was very well aware of it, having never been deceived as to the immense superiority of Consuelo, she had little trouble in persuading him. Their partnership and flight were almost determined upon at this interview, and Anzoleto thought seriously of it, although he always kept a loop-hole for escape if necessary.

Corilla, seeing his uncertainty, urged him to continue to appear, in hopes of better success; but quite sure that these unlucky trials would disgust him altogether with Venice and with Consuelo.

On leaving his fair adviser, he went to seek his only real friend, Consuelo. He felt an unconquerable desire to see her again. It was the first time he had begun and ended a day without receiving her chaste kiss upon his brow; but as, after what had passed with Corilla, he would have blushed for his own instability, he persuaded himself that he only went to receive

assurance of her unfaithfulness, and to undeceive himself as to his love for her. "Doubtless," said he, "the count has taken advantage of my absence to urge his suit, and who can tell how far he has been successful?" This idea caused a cold perspiration to stand upon his forehead; and the thought of Consuelo's perfidy so affected him that he hastened his steps, thinking to find her bathed in tears. Then an inward voice, which drowned every other, told him that he wronged a being so pure and noble, and he slackened his pace, reflecting on his own odious conduct, his selfish ambition, and the deceit and treachery with which he had stored his life and conscience, and which must inevitably bear their bitter fruit.

He found Consuelo in her black dress seated beside her table, pure, serene, and tranquil, as he had ever beheld her. She came forward to meet him with the same affection as ever, and questioned him with anxiety, but without distrust or reproach, as to the employment of his time during his absence.

"I have been suffering," said he, with the very deep despondency which his inward humiliation had occasioned. "I hurt my head against a decoration, and although I told you it was nothing, it so confused me that I was obliged to leave the Palazzo Zustiniani last night lest I should faint and have to keep my bed all morning."

"Oh, Heavens!" said Consuelo, kissing the wound inflicted by her rival; "you have suffered, and still suffer."

"No, the rest has done me good: do not think of it; but tell me how you managed to get home all alone last night."

"Alone? Oh, no; the count brought me in his gondola."

"Ah, I was sure of it," cried Anzoleto, in a constrained voice. "And of course he said a great many flattering things to you in this interview."

"What could he say that he has not already said a hundred times? He would spoil me and make me vain were I not on my guard against him. Besides, we were not alone; my good master accompanied me—ah! my excellent friend and master."

"What master?—what excellent friend?" said Anzoleto, once more reassured, and already absent and thoughtful.

"Why, Porpora, to be sure. What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking, dear Consuelo, of your triumph yesterday evening: are you not thinking of it too?"

"Less than of yours, I assure you."

"Mine! ah, do not jest, dear friend; mine was so meagre that it rather resembled a downfall."

Consuelo grew pale with surprise. Notwithstanding her remarkable self-possession, she had not the necessary coolness to appreciate the different degree of applause bestowed on herself and her lover. There is in this sort of ovation an intoxication which the wisest artists cannot shun, and which deceives some so widely as to induce them to look upon the support of a cabal as a public triumph. But instead of exaggerating the delight of her audience, Consuelo, terrified by so frightful a

noise, had hardly understood it, and could not distinguish the preference awarded to her over Anzoleto. She artlessly chid him for his unreasonable expectations; and seeing that she could not persuade him nor conquer his sadness, she gently reproached him with being too desirous of glory, and with attaching too much value to the favour of the world. "I have always told you," said she, "that you prefer the results of art to art itself. When we do our best—when we feel that we have done well—it seems to me that a little more or less of approbation can neither add to nor diminish our inward satisfaction. Recollect what Porpora said to me the first time I sang at the Zustiniani palace: 'Whoever is penetrated with a true love of his art need fear nothing—' "

"You and your Porpora," interrupted Anzoleto, with some heat, "can very easily satisfy yourselves with those fine maxims. Nothing is so easy as to philosophize on the evils of life when you know only its sweets. Porpora, although poor and oppressed, has an illustrious name. He has gathered so many laurels that his old head may whiten peaceably under their shade. You, who feel yourself invincible, are inaccessible to fear. At the first leap you raise yourself to the highest round of the ladder, and blame those who have no legs for their dizziness. That is not only uncharitable, Consuelo, but decidedly unjust. And besides, your argument is not applicable to me: you say that we should despise the approbation of the public when we have our own; but if I possess not that inward testimony of having done well, what then? can you not see that I am horribly dissatisfied with myself? Did you not hear that I was detestable? Did you not hear that I sang miserably?"

"No; for it was not so. You neither exceeded nor fell short of yourself. The emotion which you experienced hardly at all diminished your powers. Besides, it was quickly dissipated, and those things which you knew well you expressed well."

"And those which I did not know?" said Anzoleto, fixing upon her his large black eyes, rendered hollow by fatigue and anxiety.

She sighed and remained for an instant silent; then she said, embracing him—"Those which you do not know you must learn. If you had been only willing to study between the rehearsals, as I recommended—but this is not the time to reproach you; on the contrary, it is the time to repair all. Come, let us take only two hours a day, and you will see how soon we shall triumph over the obstacles which oppose your success."

"Will it then be the work of one day?"

"It will be the work of some months at most."

"And I play to-morrow! I continue to appear before an audience which judges me by my defects much more than by my good qualities."

"But which will quickly perceive your progress."

"Who knows? If they take an aversion to me?"

"They have proved the contrary."

"So then you think they have been indulgent to me?"

"Well, yes; they have, my friend. In those places where you were weak, they were kind; where you were strong, they did you justice."

"But, in the mean while, I shall have a miserable engagement."

"The count is magnificent in all his dealings, and does not spare money. Besides, has he not offered me more than enough to maintain us both in opulence?"

"Ah! there it is! I shall live by your success!"

"I have lived long enough by your favour."

"But it is not money that I refer to. If he does engage me at a small salary, that is of little consequence; but he will engage me for the second and third parts."

"He has no other *primo uomo** at hand. For a long time past he has relied and depended upon you. Besides, he is all in your favour. You said he would be opposed to our marriage. Far from that, he seems to wish it, and often asks me when I will invite him to my wedding."

"Ah, very good! very good, indeed! Many thanks, Signor Count."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing. Only, Consuelo, you were very wrong not to prevent my appearance until my faults, with which you were so well acquainted, were corrected by more mature study. For, I repeat it, you knew my faults."

"Did I not speak openly to you? Have I not often warned you? But you always told me that the public did not understand; and when I saw the success you had at the count's palace the first time you sang there, I thought—"

"That the people of fashion knew no more than the vulgar public."

"I thought that your good qualities would be more striking than your faults; and it has been so, it seems to me, with one as well as with the other."

"In fact," thought Anzoleto, "she speaks truly, and if I could put off my engagement—but then I run the risk of seeing a tenor take my place who would not give it back to me."

"Let me see," said he, after taking several turns up and down the apartment; "what are my faults?"

"What I have often told you: too much boldness, and not sufficient preparation; an energy more feverish than sustained; dramatic effects, which are the work of the will rather than of emotion. You were not imbued with the feeling of your part as a whole. You learned it by fragments. You saw in it only a succession of pieces more or less brilliant, and you did not seize either the gradation, or the development, or the ag-

* *First man*, as *prima donna* is *first lady*.

gregate. In your anxiety to display your fine voice and the facility which you possess in certain respects, you exhibited the whole extent of your powers almost on your entrance upon the scene. On the slightest opportunity you endeavoured after effect, and all your effects were alike. At the end of the first act they knew you—ay, knew you by heart; but they did not know that that was all, and still expected something prodigious for the end. That something was not in you. Your emotion was expended, and your voice had no longer the same freshness. You felt this, you forced both the one and the other; the audience felt it likewise, and to your great surprise remained unmoved when you considered yourself most pathetic. The reason was, that at that moment they did not see the artist inspired by passion, but the actor labouring for success."

"And how do others do?" cried Anzoleto, stamping his foot. "Have I not heard them all—all who have been applauded at Venice during the last ten years? Did not old Stefanini scream when his voice failed him? And yet they applauded him with transport."

"It is true, and I do not understand how the people could be so deceived. Without doubt they recollected the time when he had more power, and did not wish to hurt his feelings in his old age."

"And Corilla too, that idol whom you overthrew, did not she strain after effect?—did she not make efforts which were painful to see and to hear? Was she really excited when they applauded her to the skies?"

"It was because I considered her method factitious, her effects detestable, her playing as well as her singing destitute of taste and grandeur, that I presented myself so calmly upon the stage, persuaded, like you, that the public knew little about it."

"Ah!" said Anzoleto, with a deep sigh, "there you put your finger upon my wound, my poor Consuelo."

"How is that, my well beloved?"

"How is that? do you ask me? We deceived ourselves, Consuelo. The public does know. The heart teaches what ignorance conceals. It is an overgrown child, who requires to be amused and excited. It is contented with what is given it, but show it something better, and then it compares and understands. Corilla could charm it last week, although she sang false and wanted breath. You appear, and Corilla is lost, effaced, buried. Let her reappear, and she would be hissed. If I had made my *debut* after her, I should have had complete success, as I had at the count's the first time I sang after her. But beside you I was eclipsed. It ought to be so, and it always will be so. The public had a taste for tinsel—it mistook paste for precious stones—it was dazzled by it. It is shown a diamond of the first water, and already it cannot understand how it could have been so grossly deceived. It can no longer endure false diamonds, and holds them at their true value.

This is my misfortune, Consuelo, that I was brought in comparison with you, like a piece of Venetian glass beside a pearl of the fathomless ocean."

Consuelo did not understand all the bitterness and truth contained in these observations. She placed them to the account of her betrothed's affection, and answered to what she considered soft flatteries only by smiles and caresses. She pretended that he would surpass her if he would only take pains, and raised his courage by persuading him that nothing was easier than to sing like her. In this she was perfectly sincere, having never been retarded by any difficulty, and not knowing that labour itself is the first of obstacles for him who has not the love of it united with perseverance.

CHAPTER XX.

ENCOURAGED by Consuelo's frankness and by the faithless Corilla's perfidy, to present himself once more in public, Anzoleto began to work vigorously, so that at the second representation of *Ipermnestra* he sang much better. But as the success of Consuelo was proportionably greater, he was still dissatisfied, and began to feel discouraged by this confirmation of his inferiority. Everything from this moment wore a sinister aspect. It appeared to him that they did not listen to him—that the spectators who were near him were making humiliating observations upon his singing—and that benevolent amateurs, who encouraged him behind the scenes, did so with an air of pity. Their praises seemed to have a double meaning, of which he applied the less favourable to himself. Corilla, whom he went to consult in her box between the acts, pretended to ask him with a frightened air if he were not ill.

"Why?" said he, impatiently.

"Because your voice is dull, and you seem overcome. Dear Anzoleto, strive to regain your powers, which were paralyzed by fear or discouragement."

"Did I not sing my first air well?"

"Not half so well as on the first occasion. My heart sank so that I found myself on the point of fainting."

"But the audience applauded me, nevertheless."

"Alas! what does it signify? I was wrong to dispel your illusion. Continue then; but endeavour to clear your voice."

"Consuelo," thought he, "meant to give me good advice. She acts from instinct, and succeeds. But where could I gain the experience which would enable me to restrain the unruly public? In following her counsel I lose my own natural advantages; and they reckon nothing on the improvement of my style. Come, let me return to my early confidence. At my first appearance at the count's, I saw that I could dazzle those whom I failed to persuade. Did not old Porpora tell me that I had the blemishes of genius. Come, then, let me bend this public to my dictation, and make it bow to the yoke."

He exerted himself to the utmost, achieved wonders in the second act, and was listened to with surprise. Some clapped their hands, others imposed silence, while the majority inquired whether it were sublime or detestable.

A little more boldness, and Anzoleto might perhaps have won the day; but this reverse affected him so much that he became confused, and broke down shamefully in the remainder of his part.

At the third representation he had resumed his confidence, and resolved to go on in his own way. Not heeding the advice of Consuelo, he hazarded the wildest caprices, the most daring absurdities. Cries of "oh, shame!" mingled with hisses, once or twice interrupted the silence with which these desperate attempts were received. The good and generous public silenced the hisses, and began to applaud; but it was easy to perceive the kindness was for the person, the blame for the artist. Anzoleto tore his dress on re-entering his box, and scarcely had the representation terminated, than he flew to Corilla, a prey to the deepest rage, and resolved to fly with her to the ends of the earth.

Three days passed without his seeing Consuelo. She inspired him neither with hatred nor coldness, but merely with terror; for in the depths of a soul pierced with remorse, he still cherished her image, and suffered cruelly from not seeing her. He felt the superiority of a being who overwhelmed him in public with her superiority, but who secretly held possession of his confidence and his good-will. In his agitation he betrayed to Corilla how truly he was bound to his noble-hearted betrothed, and what an empire she held over his mind. Corilla was mortified, but knew how to conceal it. She pitied him, elicited a confession, and so soon as she had learned the secret of his jealousy, she struck a grand blow, by making Zustiniani aware of their mutual affection, thinking that the count would immediately acquaint Consuelo, and thus render a reconciliation impossible.

Surprised to find another day pass away in the solitude of her garret, Consuelo grew uneasy; and as still another day of mortal anguish and vain expectation drew to its close, she wrapped herself in a thick mantle, for the famous singer was no longer sheltered by her obscurity, and ran to the house occupied for some weeks by Anzoleto, a more comfortable abode than what he had before enjoyed, and one of numerous houses which the count possessed in the city. She did not find him, and learned that he was seldom there.

This did not enlighten her as to his infidelity. She knew his wandering and poetic habits, and thought that, not feeling at home in these sumptuous abodes, he had returned to his old quarters. She was about to continue her search, when, on returning to pass the door a second time, she found herself face to face with Porpora.

"Consuelo," said he in a low voice, "it is useless to hide

from me your features. I have just heard your voice, and cannot be mistaken in it. What do you here at this hour, my poor child, and whom do you seek in this house?"

"I seek my betrothed," replied Consuelo, while she passed her arm within that of her old master; "and I do not know why I should blush to confess it to my best friend. I see very well that you disapprove of my attachment, but I could not tell an untruth. I am unhappy; I have not seen Anzoleto since the day before yesterday at the theatre; he must be unwell."

"He unwell!" said the professor, shrugging his shoulders. "Come, my poor girl, we must talk over this matter; and since you have at last opened your heart to me, I must open mine also. Give me your arm; we can converse as we go along. Listen, Consuelo, and attend earnestly to what I say. You cannot—you ought not—to be the wife of this young man. I forbid you, in the name of God, who has inspired me with the feelings of a father towards you."

"Oh, my master," replied Consuelo, mournfully, "ask of me the sacrifice of my life, but not that of my love."

"I do not ask it—I command it," said Porpora, firmly. "The lover is accursed—he will prove your torment and your shame, if you do not forswear him for ever."

"Dear master," replied she, with a sad and tender smile, "you have told me so very often—I have endeavoured in vain to obey you. You dislike this poor youth; you do not know him, and I am certain you will alter your mind."

"Consuelo," said the master, more decidedly, "I have till now, I know, made vain and useless objections. I spoke to you as an artist and as to an artist, as I only saw one in your betrothed. Now I speak to you as a man—I speak to you of a man—and I address you as a woman. This woman's love is wasted; the man is unworthy of it, and he who tells you so knows he speaks the truth."

"Oh, Heavens! Anzoleto—my only friend, my protector, my brother—unworthy of my love! Ah, you do not know what he has done for me; how he has cared for me since I was left alone in the world. I must tell you all;" and Consuelo related the history of her life and of her love, and it was one and the same history.

Porpora was affected, but not shaken from his purpose.

"In all this," said he, "I see nothing but your innocence, your virtue, your fidelity. As to him, I see very well that he has need of your society and your instructions, to which, whatever you may think, he owes the little that he knows and the little he is worth. It is not, however, the less true, that this pure and upright lover is no better than a castaway—that he spends his time and money in low dissipation—and only thinks of turning you to the best account in forwarding his career."

"Take heed to what you say," replied Consuelo, in suffocating accents. "I have always believed in you, O my master!

after God; but as to what concerns Anzoleto, I have resolved to close my heart and my ears. Ah, suffer me to leave you," she added, taking her arm from the professor—"it is death to listen to you."

"Let it be death then to your fatal passion, and through the truth let me restore you to life," he said, pressing her arm to his generous and indignant breast. "I know that I am rough, Consuelo—I cannot be otherwise; and therefore it is that I have put off as long as I could the blow which I am about to inflict. I had hoped that you would open your eyes, in order that you might comprehend what was going on around you. But in place of being enlightened by experience, you precipitate yourself blindly into the abyss. I will not suffer you to do so—you, the only one for whom I have cared for many years. You must not perish—no, you must not perish."

"But, my kind friend, I am in no danger. Do you believe that I tell an untruth when I assure you by all that is sacred that I have respected my mother's wishes? I am not Anzoleto's wife, but I am his betrothed."

"And you were seeking this evening the man who may not and cannot be your husband."

"Who told you so?"

"Would Corilla ever permit him?"

"Corilla!—what has he to say to Corilla?"

"We are but a few paces from this girl's abode. Do you seek your betrothed?—if you have courage you will find him there."

"No, no! a thousand times no!" said Consuelo, tottering as she went, and leaning for support against the wall. "Let me live, my master—do not kill me ere I have well begun to live. I told you that it was death to listen to you."

"You must drink of the cup," said the inexorable old man; "I but fulfil your destiny. Having only realized ingratitude, and consequently made the objects of my tenderness and attention unhappy, I must say the truth to those I love. It is the only thing a heart long withered and rendered callous by suffering and despair can do. I pity you, poor girl, in that you have not a friend more gentle and humane to sustain you in such a crisis. But such as I am I must be; I must act upon others, if not as with the sun's genial heat, with the lightning's blasting power. So then, Consuelo, let there be no paltering between us. Come to this palace. You must surprise your faithless lover at the feet of the treacherous Corilla. If you cannot walk, I must drag you along—if you cannot stand, I shall carry you. Ah, old Porpora is yet strong, when the fire of Divine anger burns in his heart!"

"Mercy, mercy!" exclaimed Consuelo, pale as death. "Suffer me yet to doubt. Give me a day, were it but a single day, to believe in him—I am not prepared for this infliction."

"No, not a day—not a single hour," replied he inflexibly. "Away! I shall not be able to recall the passing hour, to lay the

truth open to you; and the faithless one will take advantage of the day which you ask, to place you again under the dominion of falsehood. Come with me—I command you—I insist on it."

"Well, I will go!" exclaimed Consuelo, regaining strength, through a violent reaction of her love. "I will go, were it only to demonstrate your injustice and the truth of my lover; for you deceive yourself unworthily, as you would also deceive me. Come, then, executioner as you are, I shall follow, for I do not fear you."

Porpora took her at her word; and seizing her with a hand of iron, he conducted her to the mansion which he inhabited. Having passed through the corridors and mounted the stairs, they reached at last a terrace whence they could distinguish over the roof of a lower building completely uninhabited, the palace of Corilla, entirely darkened with the exception of one lighted window, which opened upon the sombre and silent front of the deserted house. Any one at this window might suppose that no person could see them; for the balcony prevented any one from seeing up from below. There was nothing level with it, and above, nothing but the cornice of the house which Porpora inhabited, and which was not placed so as to command the palace of the singer. But Corilla was ignorant that there was at the angle a projection covered with lead, a sort of recess concealed by a large chimney, where the maestro with artistic caprice came every evening to gaze at the stars, shun his fellows, and dream of sacred or dramatic subjects. Chance had thus revealed to him the intimacy of Anzoleto with Corilla, and Consuelo had only to look in the direction pointed out, to discover her lover in a tender tête-a-tête with her rival. She instantly turned away; and Porpora, who dreading the effects of the sight upon her, had held her with superhuman strength, led her to a lower story into his apartments, shutting the door and window to conceal the explosion which he anticipated.

CHAPTER XXI.

But there was no explosion. Consuelo remained silent, and as it were stunned. Porpora spoke to her. She made no reply, and signed to him not to question her. She then rose, and going to a large pitcher of iced water which stood on the harpsichord, swallowed great draughts of it, took several turns up and down the apartment, and sat down before her master without uttering a word.

The austere old man did not comprehend the extremity of her sufferings.

"Well," said he, "did I deceive you? What do you think of doing?"

A painful shudder shook her motionless figure—she passed her hand over her forehead.

"I can think of nothing," said she, "till I understand what has happened to me."

"And what remains to be understood?"

"Everything! because I understand nothing. I am seeking for the cause of my misfortune without finding anything to explain it to me. What have I done to Anzoleto that he should cease to love me? What fault have I committed to render me unworthy in his eyes? You cannot tell me, for I search into my own heart and can find there no key to the mystery. O! it is inconceivable. My mother believed in the power of charms. Is Corilla a magician?"

"My poor child," said the maestro, "there is indeed a magician, but she is called Vanity; there is indeed a poison, which is called Envy. Corilla can dispense it, but it was not she who moulded the soul so fitted for its reception. The venom already flowed in the impure veins of Anzoleto. An extra dose has changed him from a knave into a traitor—faithless as well as ungrateful."

"What vanity, what envy?"

"The vanity of surpassing others. The desire to excel, and rage at being surpassed by you."

"Is that credible? Can a man be jealous of the advantages of a woman? Can a lover be displeased with the success of his beloved? Alas! there are indeed many things which I neither know nor understand."

"And will never comprehend, but which you will experience every hour of your existence. You will learn that a man can be jealous of the superiority of a woman, when this man is an ambitious artist; and that a lover can loathe the success of his beloved when the theatre is the arena of their efforts. It is because an actor is no longer a man, Consuelo—he is turned into a woman. He lives but through the medium of his sickly vanity, which alone he seeks to gratify, and for which alone he labours. The beauty of a woman he feels a grievance; her talent extinguishes or competes with his own. A woman is his rival, or rather he is the rival of a woman; he has all the littleness, all the caprice, all the wants, all the ridiculous airs of a coquette. This is the character of the greatest number of persons belonging to the theatre. There are indeed grand exceptions, but they are so rare, so admirable, that one should bow before them and render them homage, as to the wisest and best. Anzoleto is no exception; he is the vainest of the vain. In that one word you have the explanation of his conduct."

"But what unintelligible revenge! What poor and insufficient means! How can Corilla recompense him for his losses with the public? Had he only spoken openly to me of his suffering (alas! it needed only a word for that), I should have understood him perhaps—at least I would have compassionated him, and retired to yield him the first place."

"It is the peculiarity of envy to hate people in proportion to

the happiness of which it deprives them; just as it is the peculiarity of selfish love to hate in the object which we love, the pleasures which we are not the means of procuring him. Whilst your lover abhors the public which loads you with glory, do you not hate the rival who intoxicates him with her charms?"

"My master, you have uttered a profound reflection, which I would fain ponder on."

"It is true. While Anzoleto detests you for your happiness on the stage, you hate him for his happiness in the boudoir of Corilla."

"It is not so. I could not hate him; and you have made me feel that it would be cowardly and disgraceful to hate my rival. As to the passion with which she fills him, I shudder to think of it—why I know not. If it be involuntary on his part, Anzoleto is not guilty in hating my success."

"You are quick to interpret matters, so as to excuse his conduct and sentiments. No; Anzoleto is not innocent or estimable in his suffering like you. He deceives, he disgraces you, whilst you endeavour to justify him. However, I did not wish to inspire you with hatred and resentment, but with calmness and indifference. The character of this man influences his conduct. You will never change him. Decide, and think only of yourself."

"Of myself—of myself alone? Of myself, without hope or love?"

"Think of music, the divine art, Consuelo; you would not dare to say that you love it only for Anzoleto?"

"I have loved art for itself also; but I never separated in my thoughts these inseparable objects—my life and that of Anzoleto. How shall I be able to love anything when the half of my existence is taken away?"

"Anzoleto was nothing more to you than an idea, and this idea imparted life. You will replace it by one greater, purer, more elevating. Your soul, your genius, your entire being, will no longer be at the mercy of a deceitful, fragile form; you shall contemplate the sublime ideal stripped of its earthly covering; you shall mount heavenward, and live in holy unison with God himself."

"Do you wish, as you once did, that I should become a nun?"

"No; this were to confine the exercise of your artistic faculties to one direction, whereas you should embrace all. Whatever you do, or wherever you are, in the theatre or in the cloister, you may be a saint, the bride of heaven."

"What you say is full of sublimity, but shrouded in a mysterious garb. Permit me to retire, dear master; I require time to collect my thoughts and question my heart."

"You have said it, Consuelo; you need insight into yourself. Hitherto in giving up your heart and your prospects to one so much your inferior, you have not known yourself. You have mistaken your destiny, seeing that you were born without an equal, and consequently without the possibility of an associate

in this world. Solitude, absolute liberty, are needful for you. I would not wish you husband, or lover, or family, or passions, or bonds of any kind. It is thus I have conceived your existence, and would direct your career. The day on which you give yourself away, you lose your divinity. Ah, if Mingotti and Moltini, my illustrious pupils, my powerful creations, had believed in me, they would have lived unrivalled on the earth. But woman is weak and curious; vanity blinds her, vain desires agitate, caprices hurry her away. In what do these disquietudes result?—what but in storms and weariness, in the loss, the destruction, or vitiation, of their genius. Would you not be more than they, Consuelo?—does not your ambition soar above the poor concerns of this life?—or would you not appease these vain desires, and seize the glorious crown of everlasting genius?"

Porpora continued to speak for a long time with an eloquence and energy to which I cannot do justice. Consuelo listened, her looks bent upon the ground. When he had finished, she said, "My dear master, you are profound; but I cannot follow you sufficiently throughout. It seems to me as if you outraged human nature in proscribing its most noble passions—as if you would extinguish the instincts which God himself has implanted, for the purpose of elevating what would otherwise be a monstrous and anti-social impulse. Were I a better Christian, I should perhaps better understand you; I shall try to become so, and that is all I can promise."

She took her leave, apparently tranquil, but in reality deeply agitated. The great though austere artist conducted her home, always preaching but never convincing. He nevertheless was of infinite service in opening to her a vast field of serious thought and inquiry, wherein Anzoleto's particular crime served but as a painful and solemn introduction to thoughts of eternity. She passed long hours, praying, weeping, and reflecting; then lay down to rest, with a virtuous and confiding hope in a merciful and compassionate God.

The next day Porpora announced to her that there would be a rehearsal of *Ipermnestra* for Stefanini, who was to take Anzoleto's part. The latter was ill, confined to bed, and complained of a loss of voice. Consuelo's first impulse was to fly to him and nurse him. "Spare yourself this trouble," said the professor, "he is perfectly well; the physician of the theatre has said so, and he will be this evening with Corilla. But Count Zustiniani, who understands very well what all that means, and who consents without much regret that he should put off his appearance, has forbidden the physician to unmask the pretence, and has requested the good Stefanini to return to the theatre for some days."

"But, good Heavens! what does Anzoleto mean to do? is he about to quit the theatre?"

"Yes—the theatre of San Samuel. In a month he is off with Corilla for France. That surprises you? He flies from the shadow which you cast over him. He has entrusted his fate

to a woman whom he dreads less, and whom he will betray so soon as he finds he no longer requires her."

Consuelo turned pale, and pressed her hands convulsively on her bursting heart. Perhaps she had flattered herself with the idea of reclaiming Anzoleto, by reproaching him gently with his faults, and offering to put off her appearance for a time. This news was a dagger stroke to her, and she could not believe that she should no more see him whom she had so fondly loved. "Ah," said she, "it is but an uneasy dream; I must go and seek him; he will explain everything. He cannot follow this woman; it would be his destruction. I cannot permit him to do so; I will keep him back; I will make him aware of his true interests, if indeed he be any longer capable of comprehending them. Come with me, dear master; let us not forsake him thus."

"I will abandon you," said the angry Porpora, "and for ever, if you commit any such folly. Entreat a wretch—dispute with Corilla? Ah, Santa Cecilia! distrust your Bohemian origin, extinguish your blind and wandering instincts. Come! they are waiting for you at rehearsal. You will feel pleasure in singing with a master like Stefanini, a modest, generous, and well-informed artist."

He led her to the theatre, and then for the first time she felt an abhorrence of this artist life, chained to the wants of the public, and obliged to repress one's own sentiments and emotions to obey those of others. This very rehearsal, the subsequent toilet, the performance of the evening, proved a frightful torment. Anzoleto was still absent. Next day there was to be an opera buffa of Galuppi's—*Arcifanfano Re de' Matti*. They had chosen this farce to please Stefanini, who was an excellent comic performer. Consuelo must now make those laugh whom she had formerly made weep. She was brilliant, charming, pleasing to the last degree, though plunged at the same time in despair. Twice or thrice sobs that would force their way found vent in a constrained gaiety, which would have appeared frightful to those who understood it. On retiring to her box, she fell down insensible. The public would have her return to receive their applause. She did not appear; a dreadful uproar took place, benches were broken, and people tried to gain the stage. Stefanini hastened to her box half dressed, his hair dishevelled, and pale as a spectre. She allowed herself to be supported back upon the stage, where she was received with a shower of bouquets, and forced to stoop to pick up a laurel crown. "Ah, the pitiless monsters!" she murmured as she retired behind the scenes.

"My sweet one," said the old singer who gave her his hand, "you suffer greatly; but these little things," added he, picking up a bunch of brilliant flowers, "are a specific for all our woes: you will become used to it, and the time perhaps will arrive when you will only feel fatigue and uneasiness when they forget to crown."

"Oh, how hollow and trifling they are!" thought poor Consuelo. When she returned to her box, she fainted away, literally upon a bed of flowers, which had been gathered on the stage and thrown pell-mell upon the sofa. The tire-woman left the box to call a physician. Count Zustiniani remained for some instants alone by the side of his beautiful singer, who looked pale and broken as the beautiful jasmines which strewed her couch. Carried away by his admiration, Zustiniani lost his reason, and yielding to his foolish hopes, he seized her hand and carried it to his lips. But his touch was odious to the pure-minded Consuelo. She roused herself to repel him as if it had been the bite of a serpent. "Ah! far from me," said she, excited into a sort of delirium; "far from me all love, all caresses, all honied words!—no love—no husband—no lover—no family for me! my dear master has said it—liberty, the ideal, solitude, glory!" and she burst into such an agony of tears that the count, terrified, threw himself upon his knees before her and strove to calm her. But he could say nothing healing to that wounded soul, and his passion, which at that moment reached its highest paroxysm, expressed itself in spite of him. He understood but too well in her emotion the despair of the betrayed lover. He gave expression to the enthusiasm of a hopeful one. Consuelo appeared to hear him, and withdrew her hand from his with a vacant smile, which the count took for a slight encouragement.

Some men, although possessing great tact and penetration in the world, are absurd in such conjunctures. The physician arrived and administered a sedative in the style which they called *drops*. Consuelo was then enveloped in her mantle and carried to her gondola. The count entered with her, supporting her in his arms, and always talking of his love, even with a certain eloquence which it seemed to him must carry conviction. At the end of a quarter of an hour, obtaining no response, he implored a word, a look.

"To what then shall I answer?" said Consuelo, rousing herself as from a dream; "I have heard nothing."

Zustiniani, although at first discouraged, thought there could not be a better opportunity, and that this afflicted soul would be more accessible than after reflection and reason. He spoke again, but there was the same silence, the same abstraction, only that there was a not-to-be-mistaken effort though without any angry demonstration, to repel his advances. When the gondola touched the shore, he tried to detain Consuelo for an instant to obtain a word of encouragement. "Ah, signor," said she, coldly, "excuse my weak state. I have heard badly, but I understand. Oh yes, I understand perfectly. I ask this night, this one night, to reflect, to recover from my distress. To-morrow, yes, to-morrow, I shall reply without fail."

"To-morrow! dear Consuelo, oh, it is an age! But I shall submit—only allow me at least to hope for your friendship."

"Oh, yes, yes! there is hope," replied Consuelo, in a constrained voice, placing her foot upon the bank; "but do not follow me," said she, as she motioned him with an imperious gesture back to the gondola; "otherwise there will be no room for hope."

Shame and anger restored her strength, but it was a nervous, feverish strength, which found vent in hysteric laughter as she ascended the stairs.

"You are very happy, Consuelo," said a voice in the darkness, which almost stunned her; "I congratulate you on your gaiety."

"Oh, yes," she replied, while she seized Anzoleto's arm violently, and rapidly ascended with him to her chamber. "I thank you, Anzoleto. You were right to congratulate me. I am truly happy—oh, so happy!"

Anzoleto, who had been waiting for her, had already lighted the lamp, and when the bluish light fell upon their agitated features, they both started back in affright.

"We are very happy, are we not, Anzoleto?" said she, with a choking voice, while her features were distorted with a smile that covered her cheeks with tears. "What think you of our happiness?"

"I think, Consuelo," replied he, with a calm and bitter smile, "that we have found it troublesome; but we shall get on better by-and-by."

"You seemed to me to be much at home in Corilla's boudoir."

"And you, I find, very much at your ease in the gondola of the count."

"The count! You knew then, Anzoleto, that the count wished to supplant you in my affections?"

"And in order not to annoy you, my dear, I prudently kept in the background."

"Ah, you knew it; and this is the time you have taken to abandon me."

"Have I not done well?—are you not content with your lot? The count is a generous lover, and the poor, condemned singer, would have no business, I fancy, to contend with him."

"Porpora was right; you are an infamous man. Leave my sight! You do not deserve that I should justify myself. It would be a stain were I to regret you. Leave me, I tell you; but first know, that you can come out at Venice and re-enter San Samuel with Corilla. Never shall my mother's daughter set foot upon the vile boards of a theatre again."

"The daughter of your mother the *zingara* will play the great lady in the villa of Zustiniani, on the shores of the Brenta. It will be a fair career, and I shall be glad of it."

"O my mother!" exclaimed Consuelo, turning towards the bed and falling on her knees, as she buried her face in the counterpane which had served as a shroud for the *zingara*.

Anzoleto was terrified and afflicted by this energetic move-

ment, and the convulsive sobs which burst from the breast of Consuelo. Remorse seized on his heart, and he approached his betrothed to raise her in his arms; but she rose of herself, and pushing him from her with wild strength, thrust him towards the door, exclaiming, as she did so, "Away—away! from my heart, from my memory!—farewell for ever!"

Anzoleto had come to seek her with a low and selfish design; nevertheless it was the best thing he could have done. He could not bear to leave her, and he had struck out a plan to reconcile matters. He meant to inform her of the danger she ran from the designs of Zustiniani, and thus remove her from the theatre. In this resolution he paid full homage to the pride and purity of Consuelo. He knew her incapable of tampering with a doubtful position, or of accepting protection which ought to make her blush. His guilty and corrupt soul still retained unshaken faith in the innocence of this young girl, whom he was certain of finding as faithful and devoted as he had left her days before. But how reconcile this devotion with the preconceived design of deceiving her, and, without a rupture with Corilla, of remaining still her betrothed, her friend? He wished to re-enter the theatre with the latter, and could not think of separating at the very moment when his success depended on her. This audacious and cowardly plan was nevertheless formed in his mind, and he treated Consuelo as the Italian women do those madonnas whose protection they implore in the hour of repentance, and whose faces they veil in their erring moments.

When he beheld her so brilliant and so gay, in her buffa part at the theatre, he began to fear that he had lost too much time in maturing his design. When he saw her return in the gondola of the count, and approach with a joyous burst of laughter, he feared he was too late, and vexation seized him; but when she rose above his insults, and banished him with scorn, respect returned with fear, and he wandered long on the stair and on the quay, expecting her to recall him. He even ventured to knock and implore pardon through the door; but a deep silence reigned in that chamber, whose threshold he was never to cross with Consuelo again. He retired, confused and chagrined, determining to return on the morrow, and flattering himself that he should then prove more successful. "After all," said he to himself, "my project will succeed; she knows the count's love, and all that is requisite is half done."

Overwhelmed with fatigue, he slept: long in the afternoon he went to Corilla.

"Great news!" she exclaimed, running to meet him with outstretched arms; "Consuelo is off."

"Off! gracious Heaven!—whither, and with whom?"

"To Vienna, where Porpora has sent her, intending to join her there himself. She has deceived us all, the little cheat. She was engaged for the emperor's theatre, where Porpora purposes that she should appear in his new opera."

"Gone! gone without a word!" exclaimed Anzoleto, rushing towards the door.

"It is of no use seeking her in Venice," said Corilla, with a sneering smile and a look of triumph. "She set out for Palestrina at daybreak, and is already far from this on the mainland. Zustiniani, who thought himself beloved, but who was only made a fool of, is furious, and confined to his couch with fever; but he sent Porpora to me just now, to try and get me to sing this evening; and Stefanini, who is tired of the stage, and anxious to enjoy the sweets of retirement in his cassino, is very desirous to see you resume your performances. Therefore prepare for appearing to-morrow in *Ipermnestra*. In the mean time, as they are waiting for me, I must run away. If you do not believe me, you can take a turn through the city, and convince yourself that I have told you the truth."

"By all the furies!" exclaimed Anzoleto, "you have gained your point, but you have taken my life along with it."

And he swooned away on the Persian carpet of the false Corilla.

CHAPTER XXI.

The person most embarrassed respecting the part he had to play after the flight of Consuelo, was Count Zustiniani. After having allowed it to be said, and led all Venice to believe, that the charming singer favoured his addresses, how could he explain, in a manner flattering to his self love, the fact that, at the first declaration, she had abruptly and mysteriously disappeared, and thus thwarted his wishes and his hopes? Many thought that, jealous of his treasure, he had hidden her in one of his country houses. But when they heard Porpora, with that blunt openness which never deceived, say that he had advised his pupil to precede and wait for him in Germany, nothing remained but to search for the motives of so strange a resolution. The count, indeed, to put them off the track, pretended to show neither vexation nor surprise; but his disappointment betrayed itself in spite of him, and they ceased to attribute to him that good fortune on which he had been so much congratulated. The greater portion of the truth became clear to all the world—viz.: the infidelity of Anzoleto, the rivalry of Corilla, and the despair of the poor Spaniard, whom they pitied and sincerely regretted. Anzoleto's first impulse had been to run to Porpora; but the latter repulsed him sternly. "Cease to question me, ambitious young man without heart and without truth," the indignant master replied; "you never merited the affection of that noble girl, and you shall never know from me what has become of her. I will take every care that you shall not find a trace of her; and if by chance you should one day meet with her, I hope that your image will be effaced from her heart and memory as fully as I desire and labour to accomplish it."

From Porpora, Anzoleto went to the Corte Minelli. He found Consuelo's apartment already surrendered to a new occupant, and encumbered with the materials of his labour. He was a worker in glass, long since installed in the house, and who transferred his workshop to her room with much glee.

"Ah, ha! it is you, my boy?" said he to the young tenor; "you have come to see me in my new shop? I shall do very well here, and my wife is very glad that she can lodge all the children below. What are you looking for? Did little Consuelo forget anything? Look, my child, search; it will not annoy me."

"Where have they put her furniture?" said Anzoleto, agitated and struck with despair at not finding any vestige of Consuelo, in this place which had been consecrated to the purest enjoyments of his life.

"The furniture is below in the court; she made a present of it to mother Agatha, and she did well. The old woman is poor, and will make a little money out of it. Oh! Consuelo always had a good heart. She has not left a farthing of debt in the Corte, and she made a small present to everybody when she went away. She merely took her crucifix with her. But it was very odd her going off in the middle of the night without telling any one! Master Porpora came this morning to arrange all her affairs: it was like the execution of a will. It grieved all the neighbours, but they consoled themselves at last with the thought that she is no doubt going to live in a fine palace on the canalazzo, now that she is rich and a great lady. As for me, I always said she would make a fortune with her voice, she worked so hard. And when will the wedding be, Anzoleto? I hope that you will buy something from me to make presents to all the young girls of the quarter."

"Yes, yes," replied Anzoleto wildly. He fled with death in his soul, and saw in the court all the gossips of the place holding an auction of Consuelo's bed and table—that bed on which he had seen her sleep, that table at which he had seen her work! "Oh, Heavens! already nothing left of her!" cried he involuntarily, wringing his hands. He felt almost tempted to go and stab Corilla.

After an interval of three days he reappeared on the stage with Corilla. They were both outrageously hissed, and the curtain had to be lowered before the piece was finished. Anzoleto was furious, Corilla perfectly unconcerned. "This is what your protection procures me," said he, in a threatening tone, as soon as he was alone with her. The prima donna answered him with great coolness—"You are affected by trifles, my poor child; it is easily seen that you know little of the public, and have never borne the brunt of its caprices. I was so well prepared for the reverse of this evening, that I did not even take the pains to look over my part; and if I did not tell you what was to happen, it was because I knew very well you would not have had courage enough to enter upon the stage

with the certainty of being hissed. Now, however, you must know what you have to expect. The next time we shall be treated even worse. Three, four, six, eight representations perhaps, will pass thus; but during these storms an opposition will manifest itself in our favour. Were we the most stupid blockheads in the world, the spirit of contradiction and independence would raise up partisans for us, who will become more and more zealous. There are so many people who think to elevate themselves by abusing others, that there are not wanting those who think to do the same by protecting them. After a dozen trials, during which the theatre will be a field of battle between the hissers and the applauders, our opponents will be fatigued, the refractory will look sour, and we shall enter upon a new phase. That portion of the public which has sustained us without well knowing why, will hear us coldly; it will be like a new début for us, and then it will depend upon ourselves, thank Heaven! to subdue the audience and remain masters of them. I predict great success for you from that moment, dear Anzoleto; the spell which has hitherto weighed you down will be removed. You will breathe an atmosphere of encouragement and sweet praises, which will restore your powers. Remember the effect which you produced at Zustiniani's the first time you were heard there. You had not time to complete your conquest—a more brilliant star came too soon to eclipse you; but that star has allowed itself to sink below the horizon, and you must be prepared to ascend with me into the empyrean."

Everything happened as Corilla had predicted. The two lovers had certainly to pay dearly, during some days, for the loss the public had sustained in the person of Consuelo. But their constancy in braving the tempest wearied out an anger which was too excessive to be lasting. Zustiniani encouraged Corilla's efforts. As for Anzoleto, the count, after having made vain attempts to draw a *primo uomo* to Venice at so advanced a season, when all the engagements were already made with the principal theatres in Europe, made up his mind, and accepted him for his champion in the struggle which was going on between the public and the administration of his theatre. That theatre had a reputation too brilliant to be perilled by the loss of one performer. Nothing like this could overcome fixed habits. All the boxes were let for the season, and the ladies held their levees there, and met as usual. The real dilettanti kept up their dissatisfaction for a time, but they were too few in number to be cared for. Besides, they were at last tired of their own animosity, and one fine evening, Corilla, having sung with power, was unanimously recalled. She reappeared, leading with her Anzoleto, who had not been called for, and who seemed to yield to a gentle violence with a modest and timid air. He received his share of the applauses, and was re-engaged the next day. In short, before a month had passed, Consuelo was as much forgotten as is the lightning

which shoots athwart a summer sky. Corilla excited enthusiasm as formerly, and perhaps merited it more; for emulation had given her more earnestness, and love sometimes inspired her with more feeling and expression. As for Anzoleto, though he had not overcome his defects, he had succeeded in displaying his incontestible good qualities. They had become accustomed to the first and admired the last. His charming person fascinated the women, and he was much sought after for the saloons, the more so because Corilla's jealousy increased the piquancy of coquetting with him. Clorinda also developed her powers upon the stage; that is to say, her heavy beauty and the easy nonchalance of unequalled dulness, which was not without its attraction for a portion of the spectators. Zustiniani, partly to relieve his mind after his deep disappointment, covered her with jewels, and pushed her forward in the first parts, hoping to make her succeed Corilla, who was positively engaged at Paris for the coming season.

Corilla saw without vexation this competition, from which she had nothing to fear either present or future; she even took a malicious pleasure in bringing out that cool and impudent incapacity which recoiled before nothing. These two creatures lived therefore in a good understanding and governed the administration imperiously. They put aside every serious piece, and revenged themselves upon Porpora by refusing his operas, to accept and bring forward those of his most unworthy rivals. They agreed together to injure all who displeased them, and to protect all who humbled themselves before their power. During that season, thanks to them, the public applauded the compositions of the *decadence*, and forgot that true and grand music had formerly flourished in Venice.

In the midst of his success and prosperity (for the count had given him a very advantageous engagement) Anzoleto was overwhelmed with profound disgust, and drooped under the weight of a melancholy happiness. It was pitiful to see him drag himself to the rehearsals hanging on the arm of the triumphant Corilla, pale, languishing, handsome as Apollo, but ridiculously foppish in his appearance, like a man wearied of admiration, crushed and destroyed under the laurels and myrtles he had so easily and so largely gathered. Even at the performances, when upon the stage with Corilla, he yielded to the necessity he felt of protesting against her by his superb attitude and his impertinent languor. While she devoured him with her eyes, he seemed by his looks to say to the audience—"Do not think that I respond to so much love? On the contrary, whoever will deliver me from it will do me a great service."

The fact was that Anzoleto, spoiled and corrupted by Corilla, turned against her the instincts of selfishness and ingratitude which she had excited in his heart against the whole world. There remained to him but one sentiment which was true and pure in its nature: the imperishable love which, in spite of

his vices, he cherished for Consuelo. He could divert his attention from it, thanks to his natural frivolity; but he could not cure himself of it, and that love haunted him like remorse, like a torture, in the midst of his most culpable excesses. In the midst of them all, a spectre seemed to dog his steps; and deep-drawn sighs escaped from his breast when in the middle of the night he passed in his gondola along the dark buildings of the Corte Minelli. Corilla, for a long time subdued by his bad treatment, and led, as all mean souls are, to love only in proportion to the contempt and outrages she received, began at last to be tired of this fatal passion. She had flattered herself that she could conquer and enchain his savage independence. She had worked for that end with a violent earnestness, and she had sacrificed everything to it. When she felt and acknowledged the impossibility of ever succeeding, she began to hate him, and to search for distractions and revenge. One night when Anzoleto was wandering in his gondola about Venice with Clorinda, he saw another gondola rapidly glide off, whose extinguished lantern gave notice of some clandestine rendezvous. He paid little attention to it; but Clorinda, who, in her fear of being discovered, was always on the look-out, said to him—"Let us go more slowly. It is the count's gondola; I recognise the gondolier."

"In that case we will go more quickly," replied Anzoleto; "I wish to rejoin him, and to know with whom he is enjoying this fresh and balmy evening."

"No, no; let us return," cried Clorinda. "His eye is so piercing and his ear so quick. We must be careful not to annoy him."

"Row, I say!" cried Anzoleto to his gondolier; "I wish to overtake that bark which you see before us."

Notwithstanding Clorinda's prayers and terror, this was the work of but an instant. The two barks grazed each other, and Anzoleto heard a half-stifled burst of laughter proceed from the other gondola. "Ha!" said he, "this is fair play—it is Corilla who is taking the air with the signor count." So saying, Anzoleto leaped to the bow of his gondola, took the oar from the hands of the barcarole, and following the other gondola rapidly, overtook it and grazed it a second time, exclaiming aloud as he passed, "Dear Clorinda, you are without contradiction the most beautiful and the most beloved of all women."

"I was just saying as much to Corilla," immediately replied the count, coming out of his cabin and approaching the other bark with consummate self-possession; "and now that our excursions on both sides are finished, I propose that we make an exchange of partners."

"The signor count only does justice to my loyalty," replied Anzoleto in the same tone. "If he permit me, I will offer him my arm, that he may himself escort the fair Clorinda into his gondola."

The count reached out his arm to rest upon Anzoleto's; but the tenor, inflamed by hatred, and transported with rage, leaped with all his weight upon the count's gondola and upset it, crying with a savage voice—"Signor count, *gondola for gondola!*" Then abandoning his victims to their fate, and leaving Clorinda speechless with terror and trembling for the consequences of his frantic conduct, he gained the opposite bank by swimming, took his course through the dark and tortuous streets, entered his lodging, changed his clothes in a twinkling, gathered together all the money he had, left the house, threw himself into the first shallop which was getting under way for Trieste, and snapped his fingers in triumph as he saw, in the dawn of morning, the clock-towers and domes of Venice sink beneath the waves.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the western range of the Carpathian mountains, which separates Bohemia from Bavaria, and which receives in these countries the name of the Boehmer Wald, there was still standing, about a century ago, an old country seat of immense extent, called, in consequence of some forgotten tradition, the Castle of the Giants. Though presenting at a distance somewhat the appearance of an ancient fortress, it was no more than a private residence, furnished in the taste, then somewhat antiquated but always rich and sumptuous, of Louis XIV. The feudal style of architecture had also undergone various tasteful modifications in the parts of the edifice occupied by the Lords of Rudolstadt, masters of this rich domain.

The family was of Bohemian origin, but had become naturalized in Germany on its members changing their name, and abjuring the principles of the Reformation, at the most trying period of the Thirty Years' War. A noble and valiant ancestor, of inflexible Protestant principles, had been murdered on the mountain in the neighbourhood of his castle, by the fanatic soldiery. His widow, who was of a Saxon family, saved the fortune and the life of her young children, by declaring herself a Catholic, and entrusting to the Jesuits the education of the heirs of Rudolstadt. After two generations had passed away, Bohemia being silent and oppressed, the Austrian power permanently established, and the glory and misfortunes of the Reformation at last apparently forgotten, the Lords of Rudolstadt peacefully practised the Christian virtues, professed the Romish faith, and dwelt on their estates in unostentatious state, like good aristocrats and faithful servants of Maria Theresa. They had formerly displayed their bravery, in the service of their emperor Charles the Sixth; but it was strange that young Albert, the last of this illustrious and powerful race, and the only son of Count Christian Rudolstadt, had never borne arms in the War of Succession, which had just terminated; and that he had reached his thirtieth year without having

sought any other distinction than what he inherited from his birth and fortune. This unusual course had inspired his sovereign with suspicion of collusion with her enemies; but Count Christian, having had the honour to receive the empress in his castle, had given such reasons for the conduct of his son as seemed to satisfy her. Nothing however had transpired of the conversation between Maria Theresa and Count Rudolstadt. A strange mystery reigned in the bosom of this devout and beneficent family, which for ten years a neighbour had seldom visited; which no business, no pleasure, no political agitation, induced to leave their domains; which paid largely and without a murmur all the subsidies required for the war, displaying no uneasiness in the midst of public danger and misfortune; which in fine seemed not to live after the same fashion as the other nobles, who viewed them with distrust, although knowing nothing of them but their praiseworthy deeds and noble conduct. At a loss to what to attribute this unsocial and retired mode of life, they accused the Rudolstadts sometimes of avarice, sometimes of misanthropy; but as their actions uniformly contradicted these imputations, their maligners were at length obliged to confine their reproaches to their apathy and indifference. They asserted that Count Christian did not wish to expose the life of his son—the last of his race—in these disastrous wars, and that the empress had, in exchange for his services, accepted a sum of money sufficient to equip a regiment of hussars. The ladies of rank who had marriageable daughters admitted that Count Christian had done well; but when they learned the determination that he seemed to entertain of providing a wife for his son in his own family, in the daughter of the Baron Frederick his brother—when they understood that the young Baroness Amelia had just quitted the convent at Prague where she had been educated, to reside henceforward with her cousin in the Castle of the Giants—these noble dames unanimously pronounced the family of Rudolstadt to be a den of wolves, each of whom was more unsocial and savage than the others. A few devoted servants and faithful friends alone knew the secret of the family, and kept it strictly.

This noble family was assembled one evening round a table profusely loaded with game, and those substantial dishes with which our ancestors in Slavonic states still continued to regale themselves at this period, notwithstanding the refinements which the court of Louis XV. had introduced into the aristocratic customs of a great part of Europe. An immense hearth on which burned huge billets of oak, diffused heat throughout the large and gloomy hall. Count Christian in a loud voice had just said grace, to which the other members of the family listened standing. Numerous aged and grave domestics, in the costume of the country—viz. large mameluke trousers, and long mustachios—moved slowly to and fro in attendance on their honoured masters. The chaplain of the castle was seated on the right of the count, the young Baroness Amelia on his left—"next his

heart," as he was wont to say with austere and paternal gallantry. The Baron Frederick, his junior brother, whom he always called his "*young* brother," from his not being more than sixty years old, was seated opposite. The Canoness Wenceslawa of Rudolstadt, his eldest sister, a venerable lady of seventy, afflicted with an enormous hump and a frightful leanness, took her place at the upper end of the table; while Count Albert, the son of Count Christian, the betrothed of Amelia, and the last of the Rudolstadts, came forward, pale and melancholy, to seat himself at the other end, opposite his noble aunt.

Of all these silent personages, Albert was certainly the one least disposed and least accustomed to impart animation to the others. The chaplain was so devoted to his masters, and so erential towards the head of the family in particular, that he never opened his mouth to speak unless encouraged to do so by a look from Count Christian; and the latter was of so calm and reserved a disposition, that he seldom required to seek from others a relief from his own thoughts.

Baron Frederick was of a less thoughtful character and more active temperament, but he was by no means remarkable for animation. Although mild and benevolent as his eldest brother, he had less intelligence and less enthusiasm. His devotion was a matter of custom and politeness. His only passion was a love for the chase, in which he spent almost all his time, going out each morning and returning each evening, ruddy with exercise, out of breath, and hungry. He ate for ten, drank for thirty, and even showed some sparks of animation when relating how his dog Sapphire had started the hare, how Panther had unkennelled the wolf, or how his falcon Attila had taken flight; and when the company had listened to all this with inexhaustible patience, he dozed over quietly near the fire in a great black leathern arm-chair, and enjoyed his nap until his daughter came to warn him that the hour for retiring was about to strike.

The canoness was the most conversable of the party. She might even be called chatty, for she discussed with the chaplain, two or three times a week, for an hour at a stretch, sundry knotty points touching the genealogy of Bohemian, Hungarian, and Saxon families, the names and biographies of whom, from kings down to simple gentlemen, she had on her finger ends.

As for Count Albert, there was something repelling and solemn in his exterior, as if each of his gestures had been prophetic, each of his sentences oracular to the rest of the family. By a singular peculiarity inexplicable to any one not acquainted with the secret of the mansion, as soon as he opened his lips, which did not happen once in twenty-four hours, the eyes of his friends and domestics were turned upon him; and there was apparent on every face a deep anxiety, a painful and affectionate solicitude; always excepting that of the young Amelia, who listened to him with a sort of ironical impatience, and who alone ventured to reply, with the gay or sarcastic familiarity which her fancy prompted.

This young girl, exquisitely fair, of a blooming complexion, lively, and well formed, was a little pearl of beauty; and when her waiting-maid told her so, in order to console her for her cheerless mode of life, "Alas!" the young girl would reply, "I am a pearl shut up in an oyster of which this frightful Castle of the Giants is the shell." This will serve to show the reader what sort of petulant bird was shut up in so gloomy a cage.

On this evening the solemn silence which weighed down the family, particularly during the first course (for the two old gentlemen, the canoness, and the chaplain, were possessed of a solidity and regularity of appetite which never failed), was interrupted by Count Albert.

"What frightful weather!" said he, with a profound sigh.

Every one looked at him with surprise; for if the weather had become gloomy and threatening during the hour they had been shut up in the interior of the castle, nobody could have perceived it, since the thick shutters were closed. Everything was calm without and within, and nothing announced an approaching tempest.

Nobody, however, ventured to contradict Albert; and Amelia contented herself with shrugging her shoulders, while the clatter of knives and forks, and the removal of the dishes by the servants, proceeded, after a moment's interruption, as before.

"Do not you hear the wind roaring amid the pines of the Boehmer Wald, and the voice of the torrent sounding in your ears?" continued Albert in a louder voice, and with a fixed gaze at his father.

Count Christian was silent. The baron, in his quiet way, replied, without removing his eyes from his venison, which he hewed with athletic hand as if it had been a lump of granite; "yes, we had wind and rain together at sunset, and I should not be surprised were the weather to change to-morrow."

Albert smiled in his strange manner, and everything again became still; but five minutes had hardly elapsed when a furious blast shook the lofty casements, howled wildly around the old walls, lashing the waters of the moat as with a whip, and died away on the mountain tops with a sound so plaintive, that every face, with the exception of Count Albert's, who again smiled with the same indefinable expression, grew pale.

"At this very instant," said he, "the storm drives a stranger towards our castle. You would do well, Sir Chaplain, to pray for those who travel beneath the tempest amid these rude mountains."

"I hourly pray from my very soul," replied the trembling chaplain, "for those who are cast on the rude paths of life amid the tempest of human passions."

"Do not reply, Mr. Chaplain," said Amelia, without regarding the looks or signs which warned her on every side not to continue the conversation. "You know very well that my

cousin likes to torment people with his enigmas. For my part I never think of finding them out."

Count Albert paid no more attention to the railleries of his cousin than she appeared to pay to his discourse. He leaned an elbow on his plate, which almost always remained empty and unused before him, and fixed his eyes on the damask table-cloth, as if making a calculation of the ornaments on the pattern, though all the while absorbed in a reverie.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A FURIOUS tempest raged during the supper; which meal lasted just two hours, neither more nor less, even on fast-days, which were religiously observed but which never prevented the count from indulging his customary habits, no less sacred to him than the usages of the Romish Church. Storms were too frequent in these mountains, and the immense forests which then covered their sides imparted to the echoes a character too well known to the inhabitants of the castle, to occasion them even a passing emotion. Nevertheless, the unusual agitation of Count Albert communicated itself to the rest of the family, and the baron, disturbed in the usual current of his reflections, might have evinced some dissatisfaction, had it been possible for his imperturbable placidity to be for a moment ruffled. He contented himself with sighing deeply, when a frightful peal of thunder, occurring with the second remove, caused the carver to miss the choice morsel of a boar's ham which he was just then engaged in detaching.

"It cannot be helped," said the baron, directing a compassionating smile towards the poor carver, who was quite downcast with his mishap.

"Yes, uncle, you are right," exclaimed Count Albert in a loud voice and rising to his feet; "it cannot be helped. The Hussite is down; the lightning consumes it; Spring will revisit its foliage no more!"

"What say you, my son?" asked the old count, in a melancholy tone. "Do you speak of the huge oak of the Schreckenstein?" *

"Yes, father; I speak of the great oak to whose branches we hung up some twenty monks the other day."

"He mistakes centuries for weeks just now," said the canoness in a low voice, while she made the sign of the cross. "My dear child," she continued, turning to her nephew, "if you have really seen what has happened, or what is about to happen, in a dream, as has more than once been the case, this miserable withered oak, considering the sad recollections associated with the rock it shaded, will be no great loss."

"As for me," exclaimed Amelia, "I am delighted that the storm has rid us of that gibbet, with its long, frightful skele-

* "Stone of Terror,"—a name not unfrequently used in these regions.

ton arms, and its red trunk which seemed to ooze out blood. I never passed beneath it when the breeze of evening moved amid its foliage, without hearing sighs as if of agony, and commending my soul to God while I turned away and fled."

"Amelia," replied the count, who just now appeared to hear her words for the first time perhaps for days, "you did well not to remain beneath the Hussite as I did for hours, and even entire nights. You would have seen and heard things which would have chilled you with terror and never have left your memory."

"Pray, be silent," cried the young baroness, starting and moving from the table where Albert was leaning; "I cannot imagine what pleasure you take in terrifying others every time you open your lips."

"Would to Heaven, dear Amelia," said the old baron, mildly, "it were indeed but an amusement which your cousin takes in uttering such things."

"No, my father; I speak in all seriousness. The oak of the Stone of Terror is overthrown, cleft in pieces. You may send the wood-cutters to-morrow to remove it. I shall plant a cypress in its place, which I shall name, not the Hussite, but the Penitent, and the Stone of Terror shall be called the Stone of Expiation."

"Enough, enough, my son!" exclaimed the agonized old man. "Banish these melancholy images, and leave it to God to judge the actions of men."

"They have disappeared, father—annihilated, with the implements of torture which the breath of the storm and the fire of Heaven have scattered in the dust. In place of pendent skeletons, fruits and flowers rock themselves amid the zephyrs on the new branches; and in place of the man in black who nightly lit up the flames beside the stake, I see a pure celestial soul which hovers over my head and yours. The storm is gone, the danger over; those who travelled are in shelter; my soul is in peace, the period of expiation draws nigh, and I am about to be born again."

"May what you say, O well-beloved child, prove true!" said Christian, with extreme tenderness; "and may you be freed from the phantoms which trouble your repose! Heaven grant me this blessing, and restore peace, and hope, and light to my son!"

Before the old man had finished speaking, Albert leaned forward, and appeared to fall into a tranquil slumber.

"What means this?" broke in the young baroness; "what do I see?—Albert sleeping at table? Very gallant, truly!"

"This deep and sudden sleep," said the chaplain, surveying the young man with intense interest, "is a favourable crisis, which leads me to look forward to a happy change, for a time at least, in his situation."

"Let no one speak to him, or attempt to rouse him," exclaimed Count Christian.

Merciful Heaven," prayed the canoness, with clasped hands, "realize this prediction, and let his thirtieth year be that of his recovery!"

"Amen!" added the chaplain, devoutly. "Let us raise our hearts with thanks to the God of Mercy for the food which he has given us, and entreat him to deliver this noble youth, the object of so much solicitude."

They rose for grace, and every one remained standing, absorbed in prayer for the last of the Rudolstadts. As for the old count, tears streamed down his withered cheeks. He then gave orders to his faithful servants to convey his son to his apartment, when Baron Frederick, considering how he could best display his devotion towards his nephew, observed with childish satisfaction; "Dear brother, a good idea has occurred to me. If your son awakens in the seclusion of his chamber, while digestion is going on, bad dreams may assail him. Bring him to the saloon, and place him in my large arm-chair. It is the best one for sleeping in in the whole house. He will be better there than in bed, and when he awakens he will find a good fire and friends to cheer his heart."

"You are right, brother;" replied Christian, "let us bear him to the saloon and place him on the large sofa."

"It is wrong to sleep, lying after dinner," continued the baron; "I believe, brother, that I am aware of that from experience. Let him have my arm-chair—yes, my arm-chair is the thing."

Christian very well knew that were he to refuse his brother's offer, it would vex and annoy him: the young count was therefore propped up in the hunter's leathern chair, but he remained quite insensible to the change, so sound was his sleep. The baron placed himself on another seat, and warming his legs before a fire worthy of the times of old, smiled with a triumphant air whenever the chaplain observed that Albert's repose would assuredly have happy results. The good soul proposed to give up his nap as well as his chair, and to join the family in watching over the youth; but after some quarter of an hour, he was so much at ease that he began to snore after so lusty a fashion as to drown the last faint and now far distant gusts of the storm.

The castle bell, which only rang on extraordinary occasions, was now heard, and old Hans, the head domestic, entered shortly afterwards with a letter which he presented to Count Christian without saying a word. He then retired into an adjoining apartment to await his master's commands. Christian opened the letter, cast his eyes on the signature, and handed the paper to the young baroness, with a request that she would peruse the contents. Curious and excited, Amelia approached a candle, and read as follows:—

"Illustrious and well-beloved Lord Count,

"Your Excellency has conferred on me the favour of asking a service at my hands. This, indeed, is to confer a greater favour than all those which I

have already received, and of which my heart fondly cherishes the remembrance. Despite my anxiety to execute your esteemed orders, I did not hope to find so promptly and so suitably the individual that was required; but favourable circumstances having concurred to an unforeseen extent in aiding me to fulfil the desires of your Highness, I hasten to send a young person who realizes, at least in part, the required conditions. I therefore send her only provisionally, that your amiable and illustrious niece may not too impatiently await a more satisfactory termination to my researches and proceedings.

"The individual who has the honour to present this is my pupil, and in a measure my adopted child; she will prove, as the amiable baroness has desired, an agreeable and obliging companion, as well as a most competent musical instructress. In other respects, she does not possess the necessary information for a governess. She speaks several languages, though hardly sufficiently acquainted with them perhaps to teach them. Music she knows thoroughly, and she sings remarkably well. You will be pleased with her talents, her voice, her demeanour, and not less so with the sweetness and dignity of her character. Your Highness may admit her into your circle without risk of her infringing in any way on etiquette, or affording any evidence of low tastes. She wishes to remain free as regards your noble family, and therefore will accept no salary. In short, it is neither as a duenna nor as a servant, but as companion and friend to the amiable baroness, that she appears: just as that lady did me the honour to mention in the gracious *post-scriptum* which she added to your Excellency's communication.

"Signor Corner, who has been appointed ambassador to Austria, awaits the orders for his departure, but these he thinks will not arrive before two months. Signora Corner, his worthy spouse and my generous pupil, would have me accompany them to Vienna, where she thinks I should enjoy a happier career. Without perhaps agreeing with her in this, I have acceded to her kind offers, desirous as I am to abandon Venice, where I have only experinced annoyance, deception, and reverses. I long to revisit the noble German land, where I have seen so many happy days, and renew my intimacy with the venerable friends I left there. Your Highness holds the first place in this old, worn-out, yet not wholly chilled heart, since it is actuated by eternal affection and deepest gratitude. To you, therefore, illustrious signor, do I commend and confide my adoptive child, requesting on her behalf hospitality, protection, and favour. She will repay your goodness by her zeal and attention to the young baroness. In three months I shall come for her, and offer in her place a teacher who may contract a more permanent engagement.

"Awaiting the day on which I may once more press the hand of one of the best of men, I presume to declare myself, with respect and pride, the most humble and devoted of the friends and servants of your Highness, *chiarissima, stimatissima, illustrissima,*

"NICOLAS PORPORA,

"Chapel Master, Composer, and Professor of
"Vocal Music.

"Venice, the —— of —— 17—."

Amelia sprang up with joy on perusing this letter, while the the old count, much affected, repeated—"Worthy Porpora! respectable man! excellent friend!"

"Certainly, certainly," exclaimed the Canoness Wenceslawa, divided between the dread of deranging their family usages and the desire of displaying the duties of hospitality towards a stranger, "we must receive and treat her well, provided she do not become weary of us here."

"But, uncle, where is this precious mistress and future friend?" exclaimed the young baroness, without attending to her aunt's reflections. "Surely she will shortly be here in person. I await her with impatience."

Count Christian rang. "Hans," said he, "by whom was this delivered?"

"By a lady, most gracious lord and master."

"Here already!" exclaimed Amelia. "Where?—oh, where?"

"In her post-carriage at the drawbridge."

"And you have left her to perish outside, instead of introducing her at once?"

"Yes, madam; I took the letter, but forbade the postillion to slacken rein or take foot out of the stirrup. I also raised the bridge behind me until I should have delivered the letter to my master."

"But it is unpardonable, absurd, to make guests wait outside in such weather. Would not any one think we were in a fortress, and that we take every one who comes for an enemy? Speed away then, Hans."

Hans remained motionless as a statue. His eyes alone expressed regret that he could not obey the wishes of his young mistress; but a cannon-ball whizzing past his ear would not have deranged by a hair's breadth the impassive attitude with which he awaited the sovereign orders of his old master.

"The faithful Hans, my child," said the baron slowly, "knows nothing but his duty and the word of command. Now then, Hans, open the gates and lower the bridge. Let every one light torches, and bid the stranger welcome."

Hans evinced no surprise in being ordered to usher the unknown into a house where the nearest and best friends were only admitted after tedious precautions. The canoness proceeded to give directions for supper. Amelia would have set out for the drawbridge; but her uncle, holding himself bound in honour to meet his guest there, offered his arm to his niece, and the impatient baroness was obliged to proceed majestically to the castle gate, where the wandering fugitive Consuelo had already alighted.

CHAPTER XXV.

During the three months that had elapsed since the Baroness Amelia had taken it into her head to have a companion, less to instruct her than to solace her weariness, she had in fancy pictured to herself a hundred times the form and features of her future friend. Aware of Porpora's crusty humour, she feared he would send some severe and pedantic governess. She had therefore secretly written to him to say (as if her desires were not law to her doting relatives), that she would receive no one past twenty-five. On reading Porpora's answer she was so

transported with joy that she forthwith sketched in imagination a complete portrait of the young musician—the adopted child of the professor, young, and a Venetian—that is to say, in Amelia's eyes, made expressly for herself, and after her own image.

She was somewhat disconcerted, therefore, when, instead of the blooming, saucy girl that her fancy had drawn, she beheld a pale, melancholy, and embarrassed young person; for, in addition to the profound grief with which her poor heart was overwhelmed, and the fatigue of a long and rapid journey, a fearful and almost fatal impression had been made on Consuelo's mind by the vast pine forests tossed by the tempest, the dark night illuminated at intervals by livid flashes of lightning, and, above all, by the aspect of this grim castle, to which the howlings of the baron's kennel and the light of the torches borne by the servants, lent a strange and ghastly effect. What a contrast with the *firmamento lucido* of Marcello—the harmonious silence of the nights at Venice—the confiding liberty of her former life, passed in the bosom of love and joyous poesy! When the carriage had slowly passed over the drawbridge, which sounded hollow under the horses' feet, and the portcullis fell with a startling clang, it seemed to her as if she had entered the portals of the "Inferno" of Dante; and, seized with terror, she recommended her soul to God.

Her countenance therefore showed symptoms of extreme agitation when she presented herself before her hosts; and the aspect of Count Christian, his tall, wasted figure, worn at once by age and vexation, and dressed in his ancient costume, completed her dismay. She imagined she beheld the spectre of some ancient nobleman of the middle ages; and looking upon everything that surrounded her as a dream, she drew back, uttering an exclamation of terror.

The old count, attributing her hesitation and paleness to the jolting of the carriage and the fatigue of the journey, offered his arm to assist her in mounting the steps, endeavouring at the same time to utter some kind and polite expressions. But the worthy man, on whom Nature had bestowed a cold and reserved exterior, had become, during so long a period of absolute retirement, such a stranger to the usages and conventional courtesies of the world, that his timidity was redoubled; and under a grave and severe aspect he concealed the hesitation and confusion of a child. The obligation which he considered himself under to speak Italian, a language which he had formerly known tolerably well but which he had almost forgotten, only added to his embarrassment; and he could merely stammer out a few words, which Consuelo heard with difficulty, and which she took for the unknown and mysterious language of the Shades.

Amelia, who had intended to throw herself upon Consuelo's neck, and at once appropriate her to herself, had nothing to say—such is the reserve imparted, as if by contagion, even to

the boldest natures, when the timidity of others seems to shun their advances.

Consuelo was introduced into the great hall where they had supped. The count, divided between the wish to do her honour and the fear of letting her see his son while buried in his morbid sleep, paused and hesitated; and Consuelo, trembling and feeling her knees give way under her, sank into the nearest seat.

"Uncle," said Amelia, seeing the embarrassment of the count, "I think it would be better to receive the signora here. It is warmer than in the great saloon, and she must be frozen by the wintry wind of our mountains. I am grieved to see her so overcome with fatigue, and I am sure that she requires a good supper and a sound sleep much more than our ceremonies. Is it not true, my dear signora?" added she, gaining courage enough to press gently with her plump and pretty fingers the powerless arm of Consuelo.

Her lively voice, and the German accent with which she pronounced her Italian, reassured Consuelo. She raised her eyes to the charming countenance of the young baroness, and, looks once exchanged, reserve and timidity were alike banished. The traveller understood immediately that this was her pupil, and that this enchanting face at least was not that of a spectre. She gratefully received all the attentions offered her by Amelia, approached the fire, allowed her cloak to be taken off, accepted the offer of supper, although she was not the least hungry; and more and more reassured by the kindness of her young hostess, she found at length the faculties of seeing, hearing, and replying.

Whilst the domestics served supper, the conversation naturally turned on Porpora, and Consuelo was delighted to hear the old count speak of him as his friend, his equal—almost as his superior. Then they talked of Consuelo's journey, the route by which she had come, and the storm which must have terrified her. "We are accustomed at Venice," replied Consuelo, "to tempests still more sudden and perilous; for in our gondolas, in passing from one part of the city to another, we are often threatened with shipwreck even at our very thresholds. The water which serves us instead of paved streets, swells and foams like the waves of the sea, dashing our frail barks with such violence against the walls, that they are in danger of destruction before we have time to land. Nevertheless, although I have frequently witnessed such occurrences, and am not naturally very timid, I was more terrified this evening than I have ever been before, by the fall of a huge tree, uprooted by the tempest in the mountains and crashing across our path. The horses reared upright, while the postillion in terror exclaimed—'It is the Tree of Misfortune!—it is the Hussite which has fallen!' Can you explain what that means, *Signora Baronessa?*"

Neither the count nor Amelia attempted to reply to this

question; they trembled while they looked at each other. "My son was not deceived," said the old man! "Strange! strange in truth!"

And excited by his solicitude for Albert, he left the saloon to rejoin him, while Amelia, clasping her hands, murmured—"There is magic here, and the devil in presence bodily."

These strange remarks reawakened the superstitious feeling which Consuelo had experienced on entering the castle of Rudolstadt. The sudden paleness of Amelia, the solemn silence of the old servants in their red liveries—whose square bulky figures and whose lack-lustre eyes, which their long servitude seemed to have deprived of all sense and expression, appeared each the counterpart of his neighbour's—the immense hall wainscotted with black oak, whose gloom a chandelier loaded with lighted candles did not suffice to dissipate; the cries of the screech-owl, which had recommenced its flight round the castle, the storm being over; even the family portraits and the huge heads of stags and boars carved in relief on the wainscotting—all awakened emotions of a gloomy cast that she was unable to shake off. The observations of the young baroness were not very cheering. "My dear signora," said she, hastening to assist her, "you must be prepared to meet here things strange, inexplicable, often unpleasant, sometimes even frightful; true scenes of romance which no one would believe if you related them, and on which you must pledge your honour to be silent for ever."

While the baroness was thus speaking the door opened slowly, and the Canoness Wenceslawa, with her hump, her angular figure, and severe attire, the effect of which was heightened by the decorations of her order which she never laid aside, entered the apartment with an air more affably majestic than she had ever worn since the period when the Empress Maria Theresa, returning from her expedition to Hungary, had conferred on the castle the unheard-of honour of taking there a glass of hippocras and an hour's repose. She advanced towards Consuelo, and after a couple of courtesies and a harangue in German, which she had apparently learned by heart, proceeded to kiss her forehead. The poor girl, cold as marble, received what she considered a death salute, and murmured some inaudible reply.

When the canoness had returned to the saloon, for she saw that she rather frightened the stranger than otherwise, Amelia burst into laughter long and loud.

"By my faith," said she to her companion, "I dare swear you thought you saw the ghost of Queen Libussa; but calm yourself, it is my aunt, the best and most tiresome of women."

Hardly had Consuelo recovered from this emotion when she heard the creaking of great Hungarian boots behind her. A heavy and measured step shook the floor, and a man with a face so massive, red, and square, that those of the servants appeared pale and aristocratic beside it, traversed the hall in

profound silence, and went out by the great door which the valets respectfully opened for him. Fresh agitation on the part of Consuelo, fresh laughter on that of Amelia.

"This," said she, "is Baron Rudolstadt, the greatest hunter, the most unparalleled sleeper, and the best of fathers. His nap in the saloon is concluded. At nine he rises from his chair, without on that account awaking, walks across this hall without seeing or hearing anything, retires to rest, and wakes with the dawn, alert, active, vigorous as if he were still young, and bent on pursuing the chase anew with falcon, hound, and horse."

Hardly had she concluded when the chaplain passed. He was stout, short, and pale, as a dropsical patient. A life of meditation does not suit the dull Sclavonian temperament, and the good man's obesity was no criterion of robust health. He made a profound bow to the ladies, spoke in an under tone to a servant, and disappeared in the track of the baron. Forthwith old Hans and another of these automatons, which Consuelo could not distinguish, so closely did they resemble each other, took their way to the saloon. Consuelo, unable any longer even to appear to eat, followed them with her eyes. Hardly had they passed the door, when a new apparition, more striking than all the rest, presented itself at the threshold. It was a youth of lofty stature and admirable proportions, but with a countenance of corpse-like paleness. He was attired in black from head to foot, while a velvet cloak trimmed with sable and held by tassels and clasps of gold, hung from his shoulders. Hair of ebon blackness fell in disorder over his pale cheeks, which were further concealed by the curls of his glossy beard. He motioned away the servants who advanced to meet him, with an imperative gesture, before which they recoiled as if his gaze had fascinated them. Then he turned towards Count Christian who followed him.

"I assure you, father," said he, in a sweet voice and winning accents, "that I have never felt so calm. Something great is accomplished in my destiny, and the peace of Heaven has descended on our house."

"May God grant it, my child!" exclaimed the old man, extending his hand to bless him.

The youth bent his head reverently under the hand of his father; then raising it with a mild and sweet expression, he advanced to the centre of the hall, smiled faintly, while he slightly touched the hand which Amelia held out to him, and looked earnestly at Consuelo for some seconds. Struck with involuntary respect, Consuelo saluted him with downcast eyes; but he did not return the salutation, and still continued to gaze on her.

"This is the young person," said the canoness in German, "whom——" But the young man interrupted her with a gesture which seemed to say, "Do not speak to me, do not disturb my thoughts." Then slowly turning away, without

testifying either surprise or interest, he deliberately retired by the great door.

"You must excuse him, my dear young lady," said the canoness; "he ——"

"I beg pardon, aunt, for interrupting you," exclaimed Amelia; "but you are speaking German, which the signora does not understand."

"Pardon me, dear signora," replied Consuelo, in Italian; "I have spoken many languages in my childhood, for I have travelled a good deal. I remember enough of German to understand it perfectly. I dare not yet attempt to speak it, but if you will be so good as to give me some lessons, I hope to regain my knowledge of it in a few days."

"I feel just in the same position," replied the canoness, in German. "I comprehend all the young lady says, yet could not speak her language. Since she understands me, I may tell her that I hope she will pardon my nephew the rudeness of which he has been guilty in not saluting her, when I inform her that this young man has been seriously ill, and that after his fainting fit he is so weak that probably he did not see her. Is not this so, brother?" asked the good Wenceslawa, trembling at the falsehoods she had uttered, and seeking her pardon in the eyes of Count Christian.

"My dear sister," replied the old man, "it is generous in you to excuse my son. The signora, I trust, will not be too much surprised on learning certain particulars which we shall communicate to her to-morrow with all the confidence which we ought to feel for a child of Porpora, and I hope I may soon add, a friend of the family."

It was now the hour for retiring, and the habits of the establishment were so uniform, that if the two young girls had remained much longer at table, the servants would doubtless have removed the chairs and extinguished the lights, just as if they had not been there. Besides, Consuelo longed to retire, and the baroness conducted her to the elegant and comfortable apartment which had been set apart for her accommodation.

"I should like to have an hour's chat with you," said she, as soon as the canoness, who had done the honours of the apartment, had left the room. "I long to make you acquainted with matters here, so as to enable you to put up with our eccentricities. But you are so tired that you must certainly wish, in preference, to repose."

"Do not let that prevent you, signora," replied Consuelo; "I am fatigued, it is true, but I feel so excited that I am sure I shall not close my eyes during the night. Therefore talk to me as much as you please, with this stipulation only, that it shall be in German. It will serve as a lesson for me; for I perceive that the Signor Count and the canoness as well, are not familiar with Italian."

"Let us make a bargain," said Amelia. "You shall go to

bed to rest yourself a little, while I throw on a dressing-gown and dismiss my waiting-maid. I shall then return, seat myself by your bedside, and speak German so long as we can keep awake. Is it agreed?"

"With all my heart," replied Consuelo.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"KNOW, then, my dear," said Amelia, when she had settled herself as aforesaid—"but, now that I think of it, I do not know your name," she added, smiling. "It is time, however, to banish all ceremony between us; you will call me Amelia, while I shall call you——"

"I have a singular name, somewhat difficult to pronounce," replied Consuelo. "The excellent Porpora, when he sent me hither, requested me to assume his name, according to the custom which prevails among masters towards their favourite pupils. I share this privilege, therefore, with the great Huber, surnamed Porporino; but, in place of Porporina, please to call me simply Nina."

"Let it be Nina, then, between ourselves," said Amelia. "Now, listen, for I have a long story to tell you; and if I do not go back a little into the history of the past, you will never understand what took place in this house to-day."

"I am all attention," replied the new Porporina.

"Of course, my dear Nina," said the young baroness, "you know something of the history of Bohemia."

"Alas!" replied Consuelo, "as my master must have informed you, I am very deficient in information. I know somewhat of the history of music, indeed; but as to that of Bohemia or any other country, I know nothing."

"In that case," replied Amelia, "I must tell you enough of it to render my story intelligible. Some three hundred years ago, the people among whom you now find yourself, were great, heroic, and unconquerable. They had, indeed, strange masters, and a religion which they did not very well understand, but which their rulers wished to impose by force. They were oppressed by hordes of monks, while a cruel and abandoned king insulted their dignity, and crushed their sympathies. But a secret fury and deep-seated hatred fermented below; the storm broke out; the strangers were expelled; religion was reformed; convents were pillaged and rased to the ground, while the drunken Wenceslas was cast into prison, and deprived of his crown. The signal of the revolt had been the execution of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, two wise and courageous Bohemians, who wished to examine and throw light upon the mysteries of Catholicism, and whom a council cited, condemned, and burned, after having promised them safe conduct and freedom of discussion. This infamous treason was so grating to national honour, that a bloody war ravaged Bohe-

mia, and a large portion of Germany, for many years. This exterminating war was called the war of the Hussites. Innumerable and dreadful crimes were committed on both sides. The manners of the times were fierce and cruel over the whole earth. Party spirit and religious fanaticism rendered them still more dreadful; and Bohemia was the terror of Europe. I shall not shock your imagination, already unfavourably impressed by the appearance of this savage country, by reciting the horrible scenes which then took place. On the one side, it was nothing but murder, burnings, destructions; churches profaned, and monks and nuns mutilated, hung, and thrown into boiling pitch. On the other side, villages were destroyed, whole districts desolated, treasons, falsehoods, cruelties, abounded on every side. Hussites were cast by thousands into the mines, filling abysses with their dead bodies, and strewing the earth with their own bones and those of their enemies. These terrible Hussites were for a long time invincible; even yet their name is not mentioned without terror: and yet their patriotism, their intrepid constancy, and incredible exploits, have bequeathed to us a secret feeling of pride and admiration, which young minds, such as mine, find it somewhat difficult to conceal."

"And why conceal it?" asked Consuelo, simply.

"It is because Bohemia has fallen back, after many struggles, under the yoke of slavery. Bohemia is no more, my poor Nina. Our masters were well aware that the religious liberty of our country was also its political freedom; therefore they have stifled both."

"See," replied Consuelo, "how ignorant I am! I never heard of these things before, and I did not dream that men could be so unhappy and so wicked."

"A hundred years after John Huss, another wise man, a new sectarian, a poor monk called Martin Luther, sprang up to awaken the national spirit, and to inspire Bohemia, and all the independent provinces of Germany, with hatred of a foreign yoke and revolt against popedom. The most powerful kings remained catholics, not so much for love of religion, as for love of absolute power. Austria united with them in order to overwhelm us, and a new war, called the Thirty Years' War, came to shake and destroy our national independence. From the commencement of this war, Bohemia was the prey of the strongest; Austria treated us as conquered; took from us our faith, our liberty, our language, and even our name. Our fathers resisted courageously, but the imperial yoke has weighed more and more heavily upon us. For the last hundred and twenty years, our nobility, ruined and decimated by exactions, wars, and torments, have been forced to expatriate themselves, or turn renegades by abjuring their origin, germanising their names (pay attention to this), and renouncing the liberty of professing their religious opinions. They have burned our books, destroyed our schools—in a word, made us Austrians.

We are but a province of the empire, and you hear German spoken in a Sclavonic state; that is saying enough."

"And you now suffer and blush for this slavery? I understand you, and I already hate Austria with all my heart."

"Oh! speak low," exclaimed the young baroness. "No one can, without danger, speak thus under the black sky of Bohemia; and in this castle there is but one person, my dear Nina, who would have the boldness or the folly to say what you have just said: that is my cousin Albert."

"Is this, then, the cause of the sorrow which is imprinted on his countenance? I felt an involuntary sensation of respect on looking at him."

"Ah, my fair lioness of Saint Mark," said Amelia, surprised at the generous animation which suddenly lighted up the pale features of her companion; "you take matters too seriously. I fear that in a few days my poor cousin will inspire you rather with pity than with respect."

"The one need not prevent the other," replied Consuelo, "but explain yourself, my dear baroness."

"Listen," said Amelia; "we are a strictly Catholic family, faithful to church and state. We bear a Saxon name, and our ancestors, on the Saxon side, were always rigidly orthodox. Should my aunt, the canoness, some day undertake to relate, unhappily for you, the services which the counts and German barons have rendered to the holy cause, you will find that, according to her, there is not the slightest stain of heresy on our escutcheon. Even when Saxony was protestant, the Rudolstadts preferred to abandon their Protestant electors, rather than the communion of the Romish church. But my aunt takes care never to dilate on these things in presence of Count Albert; if it were not for that, you should hear the most astonishing things that ever human ears have listened to."

"You excite my curiosity without gratifying it. I understand thus much, that I should not appear, before your noble relatives, to share your sympathy and that of Count Albert for old Bohemia. You may trust to my prudence, dear baroness: besides, I belong to a Catholic country, and the respect which I entertain for my religion, as well as that which I owe your family, would ensure my silence on every occasion."

"It will be wise; for I warn you once again that we are terribly rigid upon that point. As to myself, dear Nina, I am a better compound—neither Protestant nor Catholic. I was educated by nuns, whose prayers and paternosters wearied me. The same weariness pursues me here, and my aunt Wenceslawa, in her own person, represents the pedantry and superstition of a whole community. But I am too much imbued with the spirit of the age, to throw myself, through contradiction, into the not less presumptuous controversies of the Lutherans: as for the Hussites, their history is so ancient that I have no more relish for it than for the glory of the Greeks and Romans. The French way of thinking is to my mind; and I do not believe

there can be any other reason, philosophy, or civilization, than that which is practised in charming and delightful France, the writings of which I sometimes have a peep at in secret, and whose liberty, happiness, and pleasures, I behold from a distance, as in a dream, through the bars of my prison."

"You each moment surprise me more," said Consuelo, innocently. "How does it come that just now you appeared full of heroism, in recalling the exploits of your ancient Bohemians? I believed you a Bohemian, and somewhat of a heretic."

"I am more than heretic, and more than Bohemian," replied Amelia, laughing; "I am the least thing in life incredulous altogether; I hate and denounce every kind of despotism, spiritual or temporal; in particular I protest against Austria, which of all old duennas is the most wrongheaded and devout."

"And is Count Albert likewise incredulous? Is he also imbued with French principles? In that case, you should suit each other wonderfully?"

"Oh, we are the farthest in the world from suiting each other, and now, after all these necessary preambles, is the proper time to speak of him.

"Count Christian, my uncle, was childless by his first wife. Married again at the age of forty, he had five girls, who as well as their mother all died young, stricken with the same malady—a continual pain, and a species of slow brain fever. This second wife was of pure Bohemian blood, and had besides great beauty and intelligence. I did not know her. You will see her portrait in the grand saloon, where she appears dressed in a bodice of precious stones and scarlet mantle. Albert resembles her wonderfully. He is the sixth and last of her children, the only one who has attained the age of thirty; and this not without difficulty: for without apparently being ill, he has experienced rude shocks and strange symptoms of disease of the brain, which still cause fear and dread as regards his life. Between ourselves, I do not think that he will long outlive this fatal period which his mother could not escape. Although born of a father already advanced in years, Albert is gifted with a strong constitution, but, as he himself says, the malady is in his soul, and has ever been increasing. From his earliest infancy, his mind was filled with strange and superstitious notions. When he was four years old, he frequently fancied he saw his mother beside his cradle, although she was dead, and he had seen her buried. In the night he used to awake and converse with her, which terrified my aunt Wenceslawa so much that she always made several women sleep in his chamber near the child, whilst the chaplain used I do not know how much holy water, and said masses by the dozen, to oblige the spectre to keep quiet. But it was of no avail, for the child, although he had not spoken of his apparitions for a long time, declared one day in confidence to his nurse, that he still saw his own dear mother; but he would not

tell, because Mr. Chaplain had said wicked words in the chamber to prevent her coming back.

"He was a silent and serious child. They tried to amuse him; they overwhelmed him with toys and playthings, but these only served for a long time to make him more sad. At last they resolved not to oppose the taste which he displayed for study, and in effect this passion being satisfied, imparted more animation to him, but only served to change his calm and languishing melancholy into a strange excitement, mingled with paroxyms of grief, the cause of which it was impossible to foresee or avert. For example, when he saw the poor, he melted into tears, stripped himself of his little wealth, even reproaching himself that he had not more to bestow. If he saw a child beaten, or a peasant ill-used, he became so indignant that he would swoon away, or fall into convulsions for hours together. All this displayed a noble disposition and a generous heart; but the best qualities, pushed to extremes become defective or absurd. Reason was not developed in young Albert in proportion to feeling and imagination. The study of history excited without enlightening him. When he learned the crimes and injustice of men, he felt an emotion like that of the barbarian monarch, who, listening to the history of Christ's passion and death, exclaimed while he brandished his weapon, 'Ah! had I been there, I should have cut the wicked Jews into a thousand pieces!'

"Albert could not deal with men as they have been and are. He thought Heaven unjust in not having created them all kind and compassionate like himself; he did not perceive that from an excess of tenderness and virtue, he was on the point of becoming impious and misanthropic. He did not understand what he felt, and at eighteen was as unfit to live among men, and hold the place which his position demanded in society, as he was at six months old. If any person expressed in his presence a selfish thought, such as our poor world abounds with, and without which it could not exist, regardless of the rank of the person, or the feelings of the family towards him, he displayed immediately an invincible dislike to him, and nothing could induce him to make the least advance. He chose his society from among the most humble, and those most in disfavour with fortune and even nature. In the plays of his childhood he only amused himself with the children of the poor, and especially with those whose stupidity or infirmities had inspired all others with disgust or weariness. This strange inclination, as you will soon perceive, has not abandoned him.

"As in the midst of these eccentricities he displayed much intelligence, a good memory, and a taste for the fine arts, and his father and his good aunt Wenceslawa, who tenderly cherished him, had no cause to blush for him in society. They ascribed his peculiarities to his rustic habits; and when he was inclined to go too far, they took care to hide them under some pretext or other from those who might be offended by them. But in

spite of his admirable qualities and happy dispositions, the count and the canoness saw with terror this independent, and in many respects insensible nature, reject more and more the laws of polite society and the amenities and usages of the world."

"But as far as you have gone," interrupted Consuelo, "I see nothing of the unreasonableness of which you speak."

"Oh," replied Amelia, "that is because you are yourself, so far as I can see, of an open and generous disposition. But perhaps you are tired of my chatter, and would wish to sleep?"

"Not at all, my dear Baroness," replied Consuelo. "I entreat you to continue."

Amelia resumed her narrative in these words.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"You say, dear Nina, that hitherto you discover nothing extravagant in the actions or manner of my poor cousin. I am about to give you better proofs of it. My uncle and aunt are without doubt the best Christians and the most charitable souls in the world. They liberally dispense alms to all around them, and it would be impossible to display less pomp or pride in the use of riches than do these worthy relatives of mine. Well, my cousin made the discovery that their manner of living was altogether opposed to the spirit of the Gospel. He wished that, after the example of the early Christians, they should sell all they had and become beggars, after having distributed the proceeds among the poor. If, restrained by the respect and love which he bore them, he did not exactly use words to this effect, he showed plainly what he thought, in bitterly deploring the lot of the poor, who are only born to toil and suffer, whilst the rich live in luxury and idleness. When he had given away in charity all his pocket-money, it was in his estimation but as a drop of water in the sea, and he demanded yet larger sums, which they dared not refuse him, and which flowed through his hands as water. He has given so much, that you will no longer see a poor person in all the country which surrounds us, and I must add that we find our position nothing the better for it; inasmuch as the wants and demands of the lower orders increase in proportion to the concessions made to them, and our good peasants, formerly so mild and humble, begin to give themselves airs, thanks to the prodigality and fine speeches of their young master. If we had not the power of the imperial government to rely upon, which affords us protection on one hand, while it oppresses us on the other, I believe that, more especially since the succession of the Emperor Charles, our estates and castles might have been pillaged twenty times over by the bands of war-famished peasants which the inexhaustible benevolence of Albert, celebrated for thirty leagues round, has brought upon our backs.

"When Count Christian attempted to remonstrate with young Albert, telling him that to give all in one day was to deprive us of the means of giving anything the next, 'Why,

my beloved father,' he replied, 'have we not a roof to shelter us which will last longer than ourselves, whilst thousands of unfortunates have only the cold and inclement sky above their heads? Have we not each more clothes than would suffice for one of these ragged and shivering families? Do I not see daily upon our table more meats and good Hungarian wine than would suffice to refresh and comfort these poor beggars, exhausted with fatigue and hunger? Have we a right to refuse when we have so much more than we require? Are we even permitted to use what is necessary whilst others are in want? Has the law of Christ changed?'

"What reply could the count, the canoness, and the chaplain, who had educated this young man in the austere principles of religion, make to these fine words? They were accordingly embarrassed when they found him take matters thus literally, and hold no terms with those existing arrangements on which, as it appears to me, is founded the whole structure of society.

"It was another affair as regarded political matters. In Albert's eyes, the social arrangements which permitted sovereigns, in conformity with their pride and vainglory, to destroy millions of men and ruin entire countries, were nothing less than monstrous. This intolerance in these respects might have entailed dangerous consequences, so that his relatives no longer ventured to bring him to Vienna, Prague, or any other city where his virtuous fanaticism might have proved fatal to him. They were not even certain as to his religious views; but they knew that there was quite enough in his exalted notions to bring a heretic to the stake. He hated popes, inasmuch as these apostles of Jesus Christ leagued themselves with kings against the peace and majesty of the people. He blamed the luxury, worldly spirit, and ambition of bishops, abbés, and churchmen generally. He repeated sermons of Luther and John Huss to the poor chaplain, and in the mean time passed hours together prostrate on the chapel floor, plunged in ecstasies worthy of a saint. He observed fasts beyond the rigid prescriptions of the church; it was even said he wore a haircloth shirt; and it required all his father's influence and his aunt's tenderness to induce him to renounce austerities which were only calculated to turn his head.

"When these wise and affectionate parents saw that he was in a fair way to dissipate his patrimony in a few years, and perhaps be thrown into prison as a rebel to the holy church and empire, they at last decided on making him travel, hoping that, by seeing men and the laws of nations, which are nearly the same all over the civilized world, he would become accustomed to live like them and with them. They therefore confided him to the care of a tutor, a subtle Jesuit, a man of the world and of tact, if there ever was one, who understood his part at once, and pledged himself in his conscience to undertake all that which they did not even dare to ask of him. To speak plainly, it was thought desirable to corrupt and

blunt this untamed soul, and to form it to the social yoke, by infusing drop by drop the sweet and necessary poisons of ambition, of vanity, of religious, political, and social indifference. Do not knit your brows, dear Porporina. My worthy uncle is a simple and upright man, who from his youth has taken all these things as he has found them, and without hypocrisy and without examination, has learned how to reconcile tolerance and religion, the duties of a Christian and those of a noble. In a world and in an age where, for millions like ourselves, one man like Albert is found, he who keeps with the age and with the world, is a wise man, and he who wishes to go back two thousand years into the past, is a fool, who gives offence to his neighbours and converts nobody.

"Albert travelled for eight years. He visited Italy, France, England, Prussia, Poland, Russia, and even the Turks, and returned through Hungary, Southern Germany, and Bavaria. He conducted himself most prudently during these long excursions, spending no more than the handsome income which his parents allowed him, writing to them numerous and affectionate letters, in which he spoke merely of what he saw, without making any profound observations upon any subject whatever, and without giving his tutor any cause for complaint or ingratitude. Having returned here about the beginning of last year, after the first salutations were over, he retired, as I was informed, to the chamber which his mother had formerly occupied, remained shut up there several hours, and came out very pale to wander alone upon the mountain.

"During this time the abbé spoke confidentially with the Canoness Wenceslawa and the chaplain, who had requested him to give them full particulars respecting the physical and moral condition of the young count. 'Count Albert,' said he, 'whether the effects of travel have produced a complete change in his character, or whether, from what your lordships had related to me of his childhood, I had formed a false idea of him, has shown himself to me, from the first day of our connection, just the same as you have seen him to-day—gentle, calm, forbearing, patient, and exquisitely polite. This amiable conduct has never varied for a single instant, and I should be the most unjust of men if I advanced a single complaint against him. Nothing of what I feared as to his extravagant expenses, his abruptness, his declamations, or his exalted asceticism, has happened. He has not even once requested to manage for himself the little fortune you confided to me, and has never expressed the least dissatisfaction with my guardianship. It is true that I always anticipated his wishes, and that whenever I saw a poor man approach our carriage, I hastened to send him away satisfied, before he had even time to extend his hand. This method of proceeding succeeded completely; and I may observe, that as the spectacle of misery and infirmity has never saddened his lordship's sight, he has not once seemed to remember his old prepossessions on this point. I have never

heard him find fault with any one, blame any custom, or express an unfavourable opinion respecting any institution. That ardent devotion, the excess of which you feared, has apparently given way to a regularity of conduct every way becoming a man of the world. He has seen the most brilliant courts and the highest society of Europe, without appearing either intoxicated or offended at anything which met his eye. Everywhere he has been remarked for his beauty, his noble bearing, his unobtrusive politeness, and the good taste that distinguished his conversation, which was always well timed and appropriate. His habits have remained as pure as those of a well-educated young girl, and this without showing any prudery or bad taste. He has seen theatres, museums, and monuments; he has conversed calmly and judiciously upon the arts. In fact, I cannot in any way understand the uneasiness he has caused your lordships, having for my part never seen a more reasonable man. If there be anything extraordinary about him, it is his prudence, his steadiness, and the entire absence of strong desires and passions, which I have never met with in a young man so advantageously endowed by nature, birth, and fortune.'

"All this was in fact only a confirmation of the frequent letters which the abbé had written to the family; but they had always feared some exaggeration on his part, and were only really easy when they found that he could assert the moral restoration of my cousin, without fear of being contradicted by his conduct under the eyes of his parents. They loaded the abbé with presents and caresses, and waited with impatience for Albert's return from his walk. It lasted a long time, however; and when at last he arrived at supper hour, they were struck by his paleness and the gravity of his expression. In the first joyful moments of their meeting, his features had expressed a sweet and heartfelt satisfaction which were no longer to be found in them. They were astonished, and spoke of it anxiously in a low voice to the abbé. He looked at Albert, and turning with surprise to those who questioned him, 'I see nothing extraordinary in the count's face,' said he; 'he has the calm and dignified expression which I have always observed during the eight years I have had the honour to accompany him.'

"Count Christian was satisfied with this answer. 'He left us still adorned with the roses of youth,' said he to his sister, 'and often, alas! the victim of a sort of internal fever, which gave strength to his voice and brilliancy to his appearance; he returns embrowned by the sun of southern countries, somewhat worn by fatigue perhaps, and with that gravity of manner which becomes a full-grown man. Do you not think, my dear sister, that it is better so?'

"'I think, with all this gravity, he looks very sad,' replied my good aunt; 'and I have never seen a young man of twenty-eight so phlegmatic, and with so little to say. He answers us merely in monosyllables.'

" 'The count has always been very sparing of his words,' replied the abbé.

" 'He was not so formerly,' said the canoness. 'If he spent weeks together in silence and meditation, he had also his days of gaiety and even of eloquence.'

" 'I have never,' returned the abbé, 'seen him depart from the reserve which your ladyship remarks at this moment.'

" 'Were you better pleased when he talked too much, and said things which made us tremble?' said Count Christian to his alarmed sister. 'That is just the way with women.'

" 'He was at least alive then,' said she, 'and now he looks like an inhabitant of the other world, who takes no part in the affairs of this one.'

" 'That is the unvarying character of the count,' replied the abbé; 'he is reserved; he is a man who never communicates his impressions to others, and who, if I must speak the whole of what I think, is not much impressed by any external objects. Such is the case with cold, sensible, and reflective persons. He is so constituted; and I should fear that in seeking to excite him, the result would be to unhinge a mind so inimical to all action, and to all dangerous undertakings.'

" 'Oh! I am certain such is not his true character!' cried the canoness.

" 'Madam, I am sure, will overcome the prejudices she has formed against so rare an advantage.'

" 'In fact, dear sister,' said the count, 'I think that the abbé speaks very wisely. Has he not by his care and attention produced the result we so much desired? Has he not turned aside the misfortunes which we feared? Albert threatened to be a prodigy, a hair-brained enthusiast. He returns to us such as he should be, to merit the esteem, the confidence, and the consideration of his fellow-men.'

" 'But as senseless as a musty volume,' said the canoness: 'or perhaps prejudiced against all things, and disdaining whatever does not agree with his secret instincts. He does not even seem happy to see us, who expected him with so much impatience.'

" 'The count was very impatient to return,' answered the abbé; 'I could plainly perceive it, although he did not manifest it openly. He is so timid and reserved!'

" 'He is not naturally reserved,' replied she quickly. 'He was sometimes violent, and sometimes tender to excess. He often vexed me; but immediately when that was the case, he threw himself upon my bosom and I was disarmed.'

" 'With me,' said the abbé, 'he has never had any fault to repair.'

" 'Believe me, sister, it is much better so,' said my uncle.

" 'Alas,' said the canoness, 'then he will always have that expression which terrifies me and oppresses my heart!'

" 'It is the dignified and noble countenance which becomes a man of his rank,' replied the abbé.

"'It is a countenance of stone!' cried the canoness. 'He is the very image of my mother, not as I knew her, sensible and benevolent, but as she is painted, motionless and frozen in her frame of oak.'

"'I repeat to your ladyship,' said the abbé, 'that this has been Count Albert's habitual expression for eight years.'

"'Alas! then, there have been eight mortal years during which he has not smiled on any one,' said the good aunt, the tears flowing down her cheeks; 'for during the last two hours that I have fixed my eyes upon him, I have not seen the slightest smile animate his closed and colourless lips!' Ah! I am almost tempted to rush towards him, and press him to my heart, reproaching him with his indifference, and scolding him, as I used to do, to see if he will not as of old throw himself upon my neck with sobs.'

"'Beware of any such imprudence, my dear sister,' said Count Christian, compelling her to turn away from Albert, whom she still looked at with moistened eyes. 'Do not hearken to the weakness of your loving heart: we have proved sufficiently that excessive sensibility was the bane both of the life and strong reason of our child. By distracting his thoughts, by removing him from every emotion, the abbé, conformably to our advice and that of the physicians, has succeeded in calming that agitated soul: do not now destroy his work, from the caprices of childish tenderness.'

"The canoness yielded to these reasons, and tried to accustom herself to Albert's frigid exterior, but she could not succeed, and frequently said to her brother privately, 'You may say what you please, Christian, but I fear he has been stupified, by treating him not like a man, but like a sick child.'

"When about to separate in the evening they embraced each other. Albert received his father's blessing respectfully, and when the canoness pressed him to her heart, he perceived that she trembled, and that her voice faltered. He began to tremble also, and tore himself quickly from her arms, as if a sharp sense of suffering had been awakened within him.

"'You see, sister,' said the count, in a low voice, 'he has long been accustomed to these emotions, and you have caused him pain.' At the same time, uneasy and agitated himself, he followed his son with his eyes, to see if, in his manner towards the abbé, he could perceive any exclusive preference to that person. But Albert saluted his tutor with cold politeness.

"'My son,' said the count, 'I believe I have only fulfilled your intentions and satisfied your wishes by requesting the abbé not to leave you, as he had already proposed, and by obtaining from him a promise to remain with us as long as possible. I did not wish that the happiness of finding our family circle, once more reassembled, should be poisoned by any regret on your part, and I hope that your respected friend will aid us in securing that happiness to you without any drawback.'

"Albert answered only by a low bow, and at the same time a strange smile passed over his lips.

"'Alas!' said the canoness, as soon as he had left the room, 'Is that the smile he gives now?'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"DURING Albert's absence, the count and the canoness had formed innumerable projects for the future welfare of their dear child among which, that of marrying him occupied a prominent place. With his fine person, his illustrious name, and his still considerable fortune, Albert could have aspired to a connexion with the noblest families in the kingdom. But in case his indolence and shy retiring disposition should make him unwilling to bring himself forward and push his fortune in the world, they kept in reserve for him a young person of equally high birth with himself, since she was his cousin-german, and bore the same name; she was not so rich, indeed, but was young, handsome, and an only daughter. This young person was Amelia, baroness of Rudolstadt, your humble servant and new friend.

"'She,' said they, when conversing together by the fireside, 'has as yet seen nobody. Brought up in a convent, she will be only too happy to exchange the cloister for a husband. She cannot hope for a better match; and as to the eccentricities of her cousin, the old associations of their childhood, the ties of relationship, and a few months' intimacy with us, will go far to overcome her repugnance to them, and bring her round to tolerate, were it only for the sake of family feeling, what might be unendurable to a stranger.' They were sure of the consent of my father, who never had any will but that of his elder brother and his sister Wenceslawa; and who, to say the truth, has never had a will of his own.

"When, after a fortnight's careful observation of his manners, the constant melancholy and reserve, which appeared to be the confirmed character of my cousin, became evident to them, my uncle and aunt concluded, that the last scion of their race was not destined to win renown by great or noble deeds. He displayed no inclination for a bright career in arms, diplomacy, or civil affairs. To every proposal he mildly replied that he should obey the wishes of his relations, but that for his own part he desired neither luxury nor glory. After all, this indolent disposition was but an exaggerated copy of his father's, a man of such calm and easy temperament, that his imperturbability borders on apathy, and his modesty is a kind of self-denial. What gives to my uncle's character a tone which is wanting in his son's, is his strong sense, devoid of pride, of the duties he owes to society. Albert seemed formerly to understand domestic duties, but public ones, as they were regarded by others, concerned him no more than in his childhood. His father and mine had followed the career of arms,

under Montecuculli, against Turenne. They had borne with them into the war a kind of religious enthusiasm, inspired by the example of the Emperor. A blind obedience to their superiors was considered the duty of their time. This more enlightened age, however, strips the monarch of his false halo, and the rising generation believe no more in the divine right of the crown than in that of the tiara. When my uncle endeavoured to stir up in his son's bosom the flame of ancient chivalric ardour, he soon perceived that his arguments had no meaning for a reasoner who looked on such things with contempt.

"'Since it is thus,' my uncle observed to my aunt, 'we will not thwart him. Let us not counteract this melancholy remedy, which has at least restored to us a passionless, in place of an impetuous man. Let his life, in accordance with his desire, be tranquil, and he may become studious and philosophic as were many of his ancestors, an ardent lover of the chase like our brother Frederick, or a just and beneficent master, as we ourselves try to be. Let him lead from henceforward the untroubled and inoffensive life of an old man: he will be the first Rudolstadt whose life shall have known no youth. But as he must not be the last of his race, let us marry him, so that the heirs of our name may fill up this blank in the glory of our house. Who knows but it may be the will of Providence that the generous blood of his ancestors now sleeps in his veins only to reawaken with a fresh impulse in those of his descendants?'

"So it was decided that they should break the ice on this delicate subject to my cousin Albert.

"They at first approached it gently; but as they found this proposal quite as unpalatable as all previous ones had been, it became necessary to reason seriously with him. He pleaded bashfulness, timidity, and awkwardness in female society.

"'Certainly,' said my aunt, 'in my young days I would have considered a lover so grave as Albert more repulsive than otherwise; and I would not have exchanged my hump for his conversation.'

"'We must then,' said my uncle, 'fall back upon our last resource, and persuade him to marry Amelia. He has known her from infancy, looks upon her as a sister, and will be less timid with her; and, as to firmness of character, she unites animation and cheerfulness, she will by her good humour dissipate those gloomy moods into which he so frequently relapses.'

"Albert did not condemn this project, and, without openly saying so, consented to see and become acquainted with me. It was agreed that I should not be informed of the plan, in order to save me the mortification of being rejected, which was always possible on his part. They wrote to my father, and as soon as they had secured his consent, they took steps to obtain the dispensation from the Pope which our consanguinity rendered necessary. At the same time my father took me from

the convent, and one fine morning we arrived at the Castle of the Giants—I very well pleased to breathe the fresh air, and impatient to see my betrothed; my good father full of hope, and fancying that he had ingeniously concealed from me a project which he had unconsciously betrayed in every sentence he uttered in the course of the journey.

"The first thing which struck me in Albert was his fine figure and noble air. I confess, dear Nina, that my heart beat almost audibly when he kissed my hand, and that for some days I was charmed by his look, and delighted by the most trifling word that fell from his lips. His serious, thoughtful manner was not displeasing to me. He seemed to feel no constraint in my society: on the contrary, he was unreserved as in the days of our childhood: and when, from a dread of failing in politeness, he wished to restrain his attention, our parents urged him to continue his ancient familiarity with me. My cheerfulness sometimes caused him to smile involuntarily, and my good aunt, transported with joy, attributed to me the honour of this improvement, which she believed would be permanent. At length he came to treat me with the mildness and gentleness one displays towards a child, and I was content—satisfied that he would shortly pay more attention to my little animated countenance, and to the handsome dresses by which I studied to please him. But I had soon the mortification to discover that he cared little for the one, and that he did not even appear to see the other. One day my good aunt wished to direct his attention to a beautiful blue dress, which suited my figure admirably. Would you believe it?—he declared its colour to be a bright red! His tutor, the abbé, who had honied compliments ever ready on his lips, and who wished to give his pupil a lesson in gallantry, insinuated that he could easily guess why Count Albert could not distinguish the colour of my dress. Here was a capital opportunity for Albert to address to me some flattering remarks on the roses of my cheeks or the golden hue of my hair. He contented himself, however, with drily telling the abbé that he was as capable of distinguishing colours as he was, and with repeating his assertion that my robe was red as blood. I do not know why this rudeness of manner and eccentricity of expression made me shudder. I looked at Albert, and his glance terrified me. From that day I began to fear him more than I loved him. In a short time I ceased to love him at all, and now I neither love nor fear him; I merely pity him. You will by degrees understand why.

"The next day we were to go to Tauss, the nearest village, to make some purchases. I had promised myself much pleasure from this excursion as Albert was to accompany me on horseback. When ready to set out, I of course expected that he would offer me his arm. The carriages were in the court, but he did not make his appearance, although his servant said that he had knocked at his door at the usual hour. They sent again to

see if he were getting ready. Albert always dressed by himself, and never permitted a servant to enter his chamber until he had quitted it. They knocked in vain; there was no reply. His father, becoming uneasy at this continued silence, went himself to the room, but he could neither open the door, which was bolted inside, nor obtain a reply to his questions. They began to be frightened, when the abbé observed, in his usual placid manner, that Count Albert was subject to long fits of sleep, which might almost be termed trances, and if suddenly awakened, he was agitated, and apparently suffered for many days, as if from a shock. 'But that is a disease,' said the canoness, anxiously.

"'I do not think so,' said the abbé. He has never complained of anything. The physicians whom I brought to see him when he lay in this state, found no feverish symptoms, and attributed his condition to excess of application or study; and they earnestly advised that this apparently necessary repose and entire forgetfulness should not be counteracted by any mode of treatment.

"'And is it frequent?' asked my uncle.

"'I have observed it only five or six times during eight years; and not having annoyed him by my attentions, I have never found any unpleasant consequences.'

"'And does it last long?' I demanded in my turn, very impatiently.

"'Longer or shorter, according to the want of rest which precedes or occasions these attacks; but no one can know, for the count either does not himself recollect the cause, or does not wish to tell it. He is extremely studious, and conceals it with unusual modesty.'

"'He is very learned then?' I replied.

"'Extremely learned.'

"'And he never displays it?'

"'He makes a secret of it—nay, does not himself suspect it."

"'Of what use is it, in that case?'

"'Genius is like beauty,' replied this Jesuit courtier, casting a soft look upon me; 'both are favours of Heaven which occasion neither pride nor agitation to those who enjoy them.'

"I understood the lesson, and only felt the more annoyed, as you may suppose. They resolved to defer the drive until my cousin should awake; but when at the end of two hours I saw that he did not stir, I laid aside my rich riding-dress, and commenced to my embroidery, not without spoiling a good deal of silk and missing many stitches. I was indignant at the neglect of Albert, who over his books in the evening had forgotten his promised ride with me, and who had now left me to wait, in no very pleasant humour, while he quietly enjoyed his sleep. The day wore on, and we were obliged to give up our proposed excursion. My father, confiding in the assurance of the abbé, took his gun, and strolled out to kill a few hares. My aunt, who had less faith in the good man's opinion, went up stairs

more than twenty times to listen at her nephew's door, but without being able to hear the faintest breathing. The poor woman was in an agony of distress. As for my uncle, he took a book of devotion, to try its effect in calming his inquietude, and began to read in a corner of the saloon with a resignation so provoking that it half tempted me to leap out of the window with chagrin. At length towards evening, my aunt, overjoyed, came to inform us that she had heard Albert rise and dress himself. The abbé advised us to appear neither surprised nor uneasy, not to ask the count any questions, and to endeavour to divert his mind and his thoughts, if he evinced any signs of mortification at what had occurred.

"'But if my cousin be not ill, he is mad!' exclaimed I, with some degree of irritation.

"I observed my uncle change countenance at this harsh expression, and I was struck with sudden remorse. But when Albert entered without apologizing to any one, and without even appearing to be aware of our disappointment, I confess I was excessively piqued and gave him a very cold reception, of which however, absorbed as he was in thought, he took not the slightest notice.

"In the evening, my father fancied that a little music would raise his spirits. I had not yet sung before Albert, as my harp had only arrived the preceding evening. I must not, accomplished Porporina, boast of my musical acquirements before you; but you will admit that I have a good voice, and do not want natural taste. I allowed them to press me, for I had at the moment more inclination to cry than to sing, but Albert offered not a word to draw me out. At last I yielded, but I sang badly, and Albert, as if I had tortured his ears, had the rudeness to leave the room after I had gone through a few bars. I was compelled to summon all my pride to my assistance to prevent me from bursting into tears, and to enable me to finish the air without breaking the strings of my harp. My aunt followed her nephew; my father was asleep; my uncle waited near the door till his sister should return, to tell him something of his son. The abbé alone remained to pay me compliments, which irritated me yet more than the indifference of the others. 'It seems,' said I to him, 'that my cousin does not like music.'

"'On the contrary, he likes it very much,' replied he, 'but it is according——'

"'According to the manner in which one performs,' said I, interrupting him.

"'Yes,' replied he, in no wise disconcerted; 'and to the state of his mind. Sometimes music does him good, sometimes harm. You have, I am certain, agitated him so much that he feared he should not be able to restrain his emotion. This retreat is more flattering to you than the most elaborate praise.'

"The compliments of this Jesuit had in them something so sinister and sarcastic that it made me detest him. But I was soon freed from his annoyance, as you shall presently learn.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"On the following day my aunt, who never speaks unless when strongly moved, took it into her head to begin a conversation with the abbé and the chaplain, and as, with the exception of her family affections which entirely absorb her, she is incapable of conversing on any topic but that of family honour, she was ere long deep in a dissertation on her favourite subject, genealogy, and labouring to convince the two priests that our race was the purest and the most illustrious, as well as the most noble, of all the families of Germany, on the female side particularly. The abbé listened with patience, the chaplain with profound respect, when Albert, who apparently had taken no interest in the old lady's disquisition, all at once interrupted her—

"'It would seem, my dear aunt,' said he, 'that you are labouring under some hallucination as to the superiority of our family. It is true that their titles and nobility are of sufficient antiquity, but a family which loses its name, abjures it in some sort in order to assume that of a woman of foreign race and religion, gives up its right to be considered ancient in virtue and faithful to the glory of its country.'

"This remark somewhat disconcerted the canoness, but as the abbé had appeared to lend profound attention to it, she thought it incumbent on her to reply.

"'I am not of your opinion, my dear child,' said she; 'we have often seen illustrious houses render themselves still more so, and with reason, by uniting to their name that of a maternal branch, in order not to deprive their heirs of the honour of being descended from a woman so illustriously connected.'

"'But this is a case to which that rule does not apply, answered Albert, with a pertinacity for which he was not remarkable. "I can conceive the alliance of two illustrious names. It is quite right that a woman should transmit to her children her own name joined with that of her husband; but the complete extinction of the latter would appear to me an insult on the part of her who would exact it, and an act of baseness on the part of him who would submit to it.'

"'You speak of matters of very remote date, Albert,' said the canoness with a profound sigh, 'and are even less happy than I in the application of the rule. Our good abbé might from your words suppose that some one of our ancestors had been capable of such meanness. And since you appear to be so well informed on subjects of which I supposed you comparatively ignorant, you should not have made a reflection of this kind relative to political events, now, thank God, long passed away!'

"'If my observation disturb you, I shall detail the facts, in order to clear the memory of our ancestor Withold, the last Count of Rudolstadt, of every imputation injurious to it. It

appears to interest my cousin,' he added, seeing that my attention had become riveted upon him, astonished as I was to see him engage in a discussion so contrary to his philosophical ideas and silent habits. 'Know, then, Amelia, that our great-great-grandfather, Wratislaw, was only four years old when his mother, Ulrica of Rudolstadt, took it into her head to inflict upon him the insult of supplanting his true name—the name of his fathers, which was Podiebrad—by this Saxon name which you and I bear to-day—you without blushing for it, and I without being proud of it.'

"'It is useless, to say the least of it,' said my uncle, who seemed ill at ease, 'to recall events so distant from the time in which we live.'

"'It appears to me,' said Albert, 'that my aunt has gone much farther back, in relating the high deeds of the Rudolstadts, and I do not know why one of us, when he recollects by chance that he is of Bohemian and not of Saxon origin—that he is called Podiebrad, and not Rudolstadt—should be guilty of ill-breeding in speaking of events which occurred not more than twenty-five years ago.'

"'I know very well,' replied the abbé, who had listened to Albert with considerable interest, 'that your illustrious family was allied in past times to the royal line of George Podiebrad; but I was not aware that it had descended in so direct a line as to bear the name.'

"'It is because my aunt, who knows how to draw out genealogical trees, has thought fit to forget the ancient and venerable one from which we have sprung. But a genealogical tree, upon which our glorious but dark history has been written in characters of blood, stands yet upon the neighbouring mountains.'

"As Albert became very animated in speaking thus, and my uncle's countenance appeared to darken, the abbé, much as his curiosity was excited, endeavoured to give the conversation a different turn. But mine would not suffer me to remain silent when so fair an opportunity presented itself for satisfying it. 'What do you mean, Albert?' I exclaimed, approaching him.

"'I mean that which a Podiebrad should not be ignorant of,' he replied: 'that the old oak of the Stone of Terror, which you see every day from your window, Amelia, and under which you should never sit down without raising your soul to God, bore, some three hundred years ago, fruit rather heavier than the dried acorns it produces to-day.'

"'It is a shocking story,' said the chaplain, horror-struck, 'and I do not know who could have informed the count of it.'

"'The tradition of the country, and perhaps something more certain still,' replied Albert. 'You have in vain burned the archives of the family, and the records of history. Mr. Chaplain; in vain have you brought up children in ignorance of the past; in vain imposed silence on the simple by sophistry, on the

weak by threats: neither the dread of despotic power, however great, nor even that of hell itself, can stifle the thousand voices of the past which awaken on every side. No, no! they speak too loudly, these terrible voices, for that of a priest to hush them! They speak to our souls in sleep, in the whisperings of spirits from the dead; they appeal to us in every sound we hear in the external world; they issue even from the trunks of the trees, like the gods of the olden time, to tell us of the crimes, the misfortunes, and the noble deeds of our ancestors!'

"'And why, my poor child,' said the canoness, 'why cherish in your mind such bitter thoughts—such dreadful recollections?'

"'It is your genealogies, dear aunt—it is your recurrence to the times that are gone—which have pictured to my mind those fifteen monks hung to the branches of the oak by the hand of one of my ancestors—the greatest, the most terrible, the most persevering—he who was surnamed the Terrible—the blind, the invincible John Ziska of the Chalice!'

"The exalted yet abhorred name of the chief of the Taborites, a sect which during the war of the Hussites surpassed all other religionists in their energy, their bravery, and their cruelty, fell like a thunderbolt on the ears of the abbé and the chaplain. The latter crossed himself, and my aunt drew back her chair, which was close to that of Albert. 'Good Heaven!' she exclaimed, 'of what and of whom does this child speak? Do not heed him, Mr. Abbé! Never—no, never—was our family connected by any ties, either of kindred or friendship, with the odious reprobate whose name has just been mentioned!'

"'Speak for yourself, aunt,' said Albert with energy; 'you are a Rudolstadt to the heart's core, although in reality a Podiebrad. As for myself, I have more Bohemian blood in my veins—all the purer too for its having less foreign admixture. My mother had neither Saxons, Bavarians, nor Prussians, in her genealogical tree; she was of pure Sclavonic origin. And since you appear to care little for nobility, I, who am proud of my descent, shall inform you of it, if you are ignorant, that John Ziska left a daughter who married the lord of Prachalitz, and that my mother herself, being a Prachalitz, descends in a direct line from John Ziska, just as you yourself, my aunt, descend from the Rudolstadts.'

"'It is a dream, a delusion, Albert!'

"'Not so, dear aunt; I appeal to the chaplain, who is a God-fearing man and will speak the truth. He has had in his hands the parchments which prove what I have asserted.'

"'I?' exclaimed the chaplain, pale as death.

"'You may confess it without blushing before the abbé," replied Albert with cutting irony, 'since you only did your duty as an Austrian subject and a good Catholic in burning them the day after my mother's death.'

"'That deed, which my conscience approved, was witnessed

by God alone,' falteringly replied the chaplain, terror-stricken at the disclosure of a secret of which he considered himself the sole human repository. 'Who, Count Albert, could have revealed it to you?'

"'I have already told you, Mr. Chaplain—a voice which speaks louder than that of a priest.'

"'What voice, Albert?' I exclaimed, with emotion.

"'The voice which speaks in sleep,' replied Albert.

"'But that explains nothing, my son,' said Count Christian, sighing.

"'It is the voice of blood, my father,' said Albert, in a tone so sepulchral that it made us shudder.

"'Alas!' said my uncle, clasping his hands, 'these are the same reveries, the same phantoms of the imagination, which haunted his poor mother. She must have spoken of it to our child in her last illness,' he added, turning to my aunt, 'and such a story was well calculated to make a lively impression on his memory.'

"'Impossible, brother!' replied the canoness. 'Albert was not three years old when he lost his mother!'

"'It is more likely,' said the chaplain in a low voice, 'that there must have remained in the house some one of those cursed heretical writings, filled with lies and impieties, which she had preserved from family pride, but which nevertheless she had the courage and virtue to surrender to me in her last moments.'

"'No, not one remained,' replied Albert, who had not lost a single word of what the chaplain said, although he had spoken in a low voice, and although he was walking about, much agitated, at that moment at the other end of the saloon. 'You know very well, sir, that you destroyed them all; and moreover, that the day after her death you searched and ransacked every corner of her chamber.'

"'Who has thus aided, or rather misled, your memory, Albert?' asked Count Christian in a severe tone; 'what faithless or imprudent servant has dared to disturb your young mind by an exaggerated account of these domestic events?'

"'No one, my father; I swear it to you by my religion and my conscience!'

"'The enemy of the human race has had a hand in it,' said the terrified chaplain.

"'It would probably be nearer the truth,' observed the abbé, 'and more Christian, to conclude that Count Albert is endowed with an extraordinary memory, and that occurrences, the recital of which does not usually strike a child of tender years, have remained engraved upon his mind. What I have seen of his rare intelligence, induces me readily to believe that his reason must have had a wonderfully precocious development; and as to his faculty of remembering events, I know that it is in fact prodigious.'

"'It seems prodigious to you, only because you are entirely

devoid of it,' replied Albert, drily. 'For example, you cannot recollect what you did in 1619, after Withold Podiebrad the Protestant, the valiant, the faithful (your grandfather, my dear aunt), and the last who bore our name, had dyed with his blood the Stone of Terror. You have forgotten your conduct under those circumstances, I would wager, Mr. Abbé.'

" 'I confess I have entirely forgotten it,' replied the abbé with a sarcastic smile, which was not in very good taste at a moment when it was evident to us all that Albert's mind was wandering.

" 'Well, I will remind you,' returned Albert, without being at all disconcerted. 'You immediately went and advised those soldiers of the Empire who had struck the blow, to fly or hide, because the labourers of Pilsen, who had the courage to avow themselves Protestants, and who adored Withold, were hastening to avenge their master's death, and would assuredly have cut them in pieces. Then you came to find my ancestress Ulrica, Withold's terrified and trembling widow, and promised to make her peace with the Emperor Ferdinand II. and preserve her estate, her title, her liberty, and the lives of her children, if she would follow your advice, and purchase your services at the price of gold. She consented: her maternal love prompted that act of weakness. She forgot the martyrdom of her noble husband. She was born a Catholic, and had abjured that faith only from love for him. She knew not how to endure misery, proscription, and persecution, in order to preserve to her children a faith which Withold had sealed with his blood, and a name which he had rendered more illustrious than even those of his ancestors, who had been *Hussites*, *Calixtins*, *Taborites*, *Orphans*, *Brethren of the Union, and Lutherans*.' (All these names, my dear Porporina, are those of different sects, which united the heresy of John Huss to that of Luther, and which the branch of the Podiebrads from which we descend had probably followed.) 'In fine,' continued Albert, 'the Saxon woman was afraid, and yielded. You took possession of the château, you turned aside the imperial troops, you caused our lands to be respected, and you made an immense *auto-da-fè* of our titles and our archives. That is why my aunt, happily for her, has not been able to re-establish the genealogical tree of the Podiebrads, and has resorted to the less indigestible pasture of the Rudolstadts. As a reward for your services you were made rich, very rich. Three months afterwards Ulrica was permitted to go and embrace the emperor's knees at Vienna, and graciously allowed by him to denationalize her children, to have them educated by you in the Romish religion, and to enrol them afterwards under the standard against which their father and their ancestors had so valiantly fought. We were incorporated, my sons and I, in the ranks of Austrian tyranny.'

" 'Your sons and you!' said my aunt in despair, seeing that he wandered more and more.

"'Yes, my sons Sigismond and Rodolph,' replied Albert, very seriously.

"'Those are the names of my fathes and uncle!' said Count Christian. 'Albert, where are your senses? Recall them, my son. More than a century separates us from those sad occurrences, which took place by the order of Providence.'

"Albert would not desist. He was fully persuaded, and wished to persuade us, that he was the same as Wratislaw, the son of Withold, and the first of the Podiebrads who had borne the maternal name of Rudolstadt. He gave us an account of his childhood, of the distinct recollection he had of Count Withold's execution (the odium of which he attributed to the Jesuit Dithmar, who, according to him, was no other than the abbé, his tutor), the profound hatred which during his childhood he had felt for this Dithmar, for Austria, for the Imperialists, for the Catholics. After this his recollections appeared confused, and he added a thousand incomprehensible things about the eternal and perpetual life, about the reappearance of men upon the earth, supporting himself upon that article of the Hussite creed which declared that John Huss was to return to Bohemia one hundred years after his death, and complete his work—a prediction which it appeared had been accomplished, since, according to him, Luther was John Huss resuscitated. In fine, his discourse was a mixture of heresy, of superstition, of obscure metaphysics, and of poetic frenzy; and it was all uttered with such an appearance of conviction, with recollections, so minute, so precise, and so interesting, of what he pretended to have seen, not only in the person of Wratislaw, but also in that of John Ziska, and I know not of how many other dead persons, who he maintained had been his own appearances in the past, that we remained listening to him with open mouths, and without the power of interrupting or contradicting him. My uncle and aunt, who were dreadfully afflicted at this insanity, which seemed to them impious, endeavoured to discover its origin; for this was the first time that it displayed itself openly, and it was necessary to know its source in order to be able to combat it. The abbé tried to turn it all off as a jest, and to make us believe that Count Albert had a very witty and sarcastic disposition, and took pleasure in mystifying us with his amazing learning. 'He has read so much,' said he, 'that he could in the same manner relate the history of all ages, chapter by chapter, with such details and such precision as to make us believe, if we were ever so little inclined to the marvellous, that he had in fact been present at the scenes he relates.' The canoness, who in her ardent devotion is not many degress removed from superstition, and who began to believe her nephew on the faith of his recital, received the abbe's insinuations very badly, and advised him to keep his jests for a more fitting occasion; then she made a strong effort to induce Albert to retract the errors with which he was imbued. 'Take care, aunt,' cried Albert

impatiently, 'that I do not tell you who you are. Hitherto I have not wished to know, but something warns me at this moment that the Saxon Ulrica is near.'

"'What! my poor child!' replied she; 'that prudent and devout ancestress, who knew how to preserve for her children their lives, and for her descendants the independence, the fortune, and the honours they now enjoy? Do you think she lives again in me? Well, Albert, so dearly do I love you, that I would do even more for you than she did; I would even sacrifice my life, if by so doing I could calm your troubled soul.'

"Albert looked at her a moment with an expression at once severe and tender. 'No, no,' said he at last, aproaching her and kneeling at her feet, 'you are an angel, and you used to receive the communion in the wooden cup of the Hussites. But the Saxon woman is here, nevertheless, and her voice has reached my ear several times to-day.'

"'Allow her to be me, Albert,' said I, exerting myself to cheer him, 'and do not think too ill of me for not having delivered you up to the executioners in 1619.'

"'You my mother!' said he, looking at me with flaming eyes; 'do not say that, for if so I cannot forgive you. God caused me to be born again in the bosom of a stronger woman; he retempered me in the blood of Ziska—in my own substance, which had been misled, I know not how. Amelia, do not look at me! above all, do not speak to me! It is your voice, Ulrica, which has caused me all the sufferings I endure to-day.'

"On saying this, Albert hastily left the room, and we remained overpowered by the sad discovery we had made of the alienation of his mind.

"It was then two o'clock in the afternoon; we had dined quietly, and Albert had drunk only water. There was nothing therefore which could lead us to suppose that this frenzy could be occasioned by intoxication. The chaplain and my aunt immediately rose to follow and nurse him, thinking him seriously ill. But, inconceivable as it may seem, Albert had already disappeared, as if by enchantment. They could not find him in his own apartment, nor in his mother's where he frequently used to shut himself up, nor in any corner of the château. They searched for him in the garden, in the warren, in the surrounding woods, and among the mountains. No one had seen him, far or near. No trace of his steps was anywhere to be found. The rest of the day and the succeeding night were spent in the same manner. No one went to bed in the house; our people were on foot until dawn, and searching for him with torches.

"All the family retired to pray. The next day and the following night were passed in the same consternation. I cannot describe the terror I felt—I, who had never suffered any uneasiness, who had never experienced in my life domestic events of such importance. I seriously believed that Albert

had either killed himself or fled for ever. I was seized with convulsions, and finally with a malignant fever. I still felt for him some remains of love, in the midst of the terror with which so fatal and so strange a character inspired me. My father had strength enough to pursue his usual sport of hunting, thinking that in his distant excursions he might possibly happen on Albert in the midst of the woods. My poor aunt, a prey to anguish, but still active and courageous, nursed me, and tried to comfort everybody. My uncle prayed night and day. When I saw his faith and his pious submission to the will of Heaven, I regretted that I was not devout.

"The abbé feigned some concern, but affected to feel no apprehension. It was true, he said, that Albert had never thus disappeared from his presence, but he required seasons of solitude and reflection. His conclusion was that the only remedy for these singularities was never to thwart them, and not to appear to remark them much. The fact is, that this intriguing and profoundly selfish underling cared for nothing but the large salary attached to his situation of tutor, which he had made to last as long as possible by deceiving the family respecting the result of his good offices. Occupied by his own affairs and his own pleasures, he had abandoned Albert to his extravagant inclinations. Possibly he had often seen him ill and frequently excited, and had, without doubt, allowed free scope to his fancies. Certain it is that he had had the tact to conceal them from every one who could have given us notice; for in all the letters which my uncle received respecting his son, there was nothing but eulogiums upon his appearance and congratulations upon the beauty of his person. Albert had nowhere left the impression that he was ill or devoid of sense. However this may have been, his mental life during those eight years of absence has always remained an impenetrable mystery to us. The abbé, after three days had elapsed, seeing that he did not make his appearance, and fearing that his own position had been injured by this accident, departed, with the intention as he said of seeking for him at Prague, whither the desire of searching for some rare book might, according to him, have drawn him. 'He is,' said he, 'like those learned men who bury themselves in their studies, and forget the whole world when engaged in their harmless pursuits.' Thereupon the abbé departed, and did not return.

"After seven days of mortal anguish, when we began at last to despair, my aunt, in passing one evening before Albert's chamber, saw the door open, and Albert seated in his armchair, caressing his dog who had followed him in his mysterious journey. His garments were neither soiled nor torn; only the gold ornaments belonging to them were somewhat blackened, as if he had come from a damp place or had passed the nights in the open air. His shoes did not appear as if he had walked much; but his beard and hair bore evidence to a long neglect of the care of his person. Since that day he has constantly

refused to shave himself, or to wear powder like other men, and that is why he had to you the appearance of a ghost.

"My aunt rushed towards him with a loud cry. 'What is the matter, my dear aunt?' said he, kissing her hand. 'One would imagine you had not seen me for ages.'

"'Unhappy child!' cried she, 'it is now seven days since you left us without saying a word; seven long, weary days, seven dreadful nights, during which we have searched for you, wept for you, and prayed for you.'

"'Seven days?' said Albert, looking at her with surprise. 'You must mean to say seven hours, my dear aunt, for I went out this morning to walk, and I have come back in time to sup with you. How can I have occasioned you so much anxiety by so short an absence?'

"'I must have made a slip of the tongue,' said she, fearing to aggravate his disease by mentioning it; 'I meant to say seven hours. I was anxious because you are not accustomed to take such long walks, and besides I had an unpleasant dream last night; I was foolish!'

"'Good, excellent aunt!' said Albert, covering her hands with kisses, "you love me as if I were still a little child. I hope my father has not shared your anxiety.'

"'Not at all; he is expecting you at supper. You must be very hungry.'

"'Not very. I dined well.'

"'Where and when, Albert?'

"'Here, this morning, with you, my good aunt; you have not yet recovered your senses, I perceive. Oh, I am very unhappy at having caused you such a fright! How could I foresee it?'

"'You know that such is my character. But allow me to ask you then where you have eaten and slept since you left us?'

"How could I have had any inclination either to eat or sleep since this morning?'

"'Do you not feel ill?'

"'Not the least in the world.'

"'Nor wearied? You must no doubt have walked a great deal, and scaling the mountains is so fatiguing. Where have you been?'

"Albert put his hand to his forehead, as if to recollect, but he could not tell.

"'I confess to you,' said he, 'that I know nothing about it. I was much preoccupied. I must have walked without seeing, as I used to do in my childhood; you know I never could answer you when you questioned me.'

"'And during your travels, did you pay any more attention to what you saw?'

"'Sometimes, but not always. I observed many things, but I have forgotten many others, thank God.'

"'And why *thank God?*'

"'Because there are such horrible things to be seen on the

face of the earth!' replied he, rising with a gloomy expression which my aunt had not yet observed in him. She saw that it would not do to make him talk any more, and she ran to announce to my uncle that his son was found. No one yet knew it in the house; no one had seen him enter. His return had left no more trace than his departure.

"My poor uncle, who had shown so much courage in enduring misfortune, had none in the first moments of joy. He swooned away; and when Albert reappeared before him, his face was more agitated than his son's. Albert, who since his long journey had not seemed to notice any emotion in those around him, appeared entirely renewed and different from what he had been before. He lavished a thousand caresses on his father, was troubled at seeing him so changed, and wished to know the cause. But when they ventured to acquaint him with it, he never could comprehend it, and all his answers were given with a good faith and earnestness, which proved his complete ignorance of where he had been during the seven days he had disappeared."

"What you have told me seems like a dream, my dear baroness," said Consuelo, "and has set me thinking rather than sleeping. How could a man live seven days without being conscious of anything?"

"That is nothing compared to what I have yet to relate; and until you have seen for yourself, that, far from exaggerating, I soften matters in order to abridge my tale, you will, I can conceive, have some difficulty in believing me. As for me, who am relating to you what I have seen, I still ask myself sometimes if Albert is a sorcerer, or if he makes fools of us. But it is late, and I really fear that I have imposed upon your patience."

"It is I who impose upon yours," replied Consuelo; "you must be tired of talking. Let us put off till to-morrow evening, if you please, the continuation of this incredible history."

"Till to-morrow then," said the young baroness, embracing her."

CHAPTER XXX.

The incredible history which she had just heard, kept Consuelo, in fact, long awake. The dark, rainy, and tempestuous night also contributed to fill her with superstitious fancies which she had never before experienced. "Is there then some incomprehensible fatality," said she to herself, "which impends over certain individuals? What crime against God could that young girl have committed, who was telling me so frankly just now of her wounded self-love and the vanishing of her fairest dreams? What evil have I myself done, that the sole affection of my heart should be torn from my bleeding bosom? But, alas! what fault has this savage Albert of Rudolstadt been guilty of, that he should thus lose his consciousness and the

power of governing his life? What hatred has Providence conceived for Anzoleto, thus to abandon him, as it has done, to wicked and perverse inclinations?"

Overcome at last by fatigue, she slept, and lost herself in a succession of dreams without connexion and without end. Two or three times she awoke and fell asleep again, without being able to understand where she was, and thinking she was still travelling. Porpora, Anzoleto, Count Zustiniani, Corilla, all passed in turn before her eyes, saying sad and strange things to her, and reproaching her with some unknown crime, for which she was obliged to undergo punishment, without being able to remember that she had ever committed it. But all these visions disappeared to give place to that of Count Albert, who passed continually before her with his black beard, his fixed and motionless eyes, and his suit of mourning trimmed with gold, and sometimes sprinkled with tears like a funereal pall.

On opening her eyes in the morning, fully awake, she found Amelia already dressed with elegance, fresh and smiling, beside her bed.

"Do you know, my dear Porporina," said the young baroness, as she imprinted a kiss upon her brow, "that there is something strange about you? I must be destined to live with extraordinary beings, for you also are certainly one. I have been looking at you asleep for the last quarter of an hour, to see by daylight if you are handsomer than I am. I confess to you that this matter is of some consequence to me, and that notwithstanding I have entirely abjured my love for Albert, I should be somewhat piqued if he looked upon you with interest. Do you think that strange? The reason is, he is the only man here, and hitherto I have been the only woman. Now we are two, and we shall pull caps if you extinguish me completely."

"You are pleased to jest," replied Consuelo, "and it is not generous on your part. But will you leave aside your raillery, and tell me what there is extraordinary in my appearance? Perhaps all my ugliness has come back. Indeed that must be the case."

"I will tell you the truth, Nina. At the first glimpse I caught of you this morning, your paleness, your large eyes only half closed and rather fixed than asleep, and your thin arm which lay stretched on the coverlet, gave me a moment's triumph. And then, looking at you longer, I was almost terrified by your immobility and your truly regal attitude. Your arm I will maintain is that of a queen, and your calmness has in it something commanding and overpowering, for which I cannot account. Now, I think you are fearfully beautiful, and yet there is a sweetness in your countenance. Tell me who you are. You attract and intimidate me. I feel ashamed of the follies I related of myself last night. You have not yet told me anything of yourself, and yet you are acquainted with nearly all my defects."

"If I have the air of a queen, of which I never was aware," replied Consuelo, smiling sadly, "it must be the piteous air of a dethroned one. As to my beauty, it has always seemed to me very problematical; and as to the opinion I have of you, dear Baroness Amelia, it is all in favour of your frankness and good nature."

"I am indeed frank—but are you so, Nina? Yes, you have an air of grandeur and royalty. But are you confiding? I do not believe that you are."

"It was not my place to be so first—that you will allow. It was for you, protectress and mistress of my destiny as you are at this moment, to make the first advances."

"You are right. But your strong sense terrifies me. If I seem a scatter-brain, you will not lecture me too much, will you?"

"I have no right to do so. I am your mistress in music, and in nothing else. Besides, a poor daughter of the people, like me, will always know how to keep her place."

"You a daughter of the people, high-spirited Porporina! Oh! you deceive me; it is impossible. I should sooner believe you the mysterious offspring of some family of princes. What was your mother?"

"She sang, as I do."

"And your father?"

Consuelo was struck dumb. She had not prepared all her answers to the rather indiscreet questions of the little baroness. In truth she had never heard her father spoken of, and had never even thought of asking if she had one.

"Come," said Amelia, bursting into a laugh, "I was sure I was right; your father is some grandee of Spain, or some doge of Venice."

This style of speaking seemed to Consuelo trifling and offensive.

"So," said she, with some displeasure, "an honest mechanic or a poor artist has no right to transmit a natural distinction to his child? Is it absolutely necessary that the children of common people should be coarse and misshapen?"

"That last word is an epigram for my aunt Wenceslawa," replied the baroness, laughing still more loudly. "Come, my dear, forgive me if I do plague you a little, and permit me to fashion in my own brain a more attractive romance about you. But dress yourself quickly, my child; for the bell will soon ring, and my aunt would let the family die of hunger rather than have breakfast served without you. I will help you to open your trunks; give me the keys. I am sure that you have brought the prettiest dresses from Venice, and I am dying to see all the new fashions—I have lived so long in this country of savages."

Consuelo, in a hurry to arrange her hair, gave the keys, without hearing what had been said, and Amelia hastened to open a trunk which she imagined was full of dresses; but to

her great surprise she found only a mass of old music, printed rolls worn out by long use, and apparently illegible manuscripts.

"Ah! what is all this?" cried she, hastily shaking the dust from her pretty fingers. "You have a droll wardrobe there, my dear child."

"They are treasures; treat them with respect, my dear Baroness," replied Consuelo. "There are among them the autographs of the greatest masters, and I would rather lose my voice than not return them safely to Porpora, who has confided them to me." Amelia opened a second trunk, and found it full of ruled paper, treatises on music, and other books on composition, harmony, and counterpoint.

"Ah! I understand," said she, laughing; "this is your jewel-box."

"I have no other," replied Consuelo, "and I hope you will use it often."

"Very well: I see you are a severe mistress. But may one ask, without offending you, my dear Nina, where you have put your dresses?"

"At the bottom of this little box," replied Consuelo, opening it, and showing the baroness a little dress of black silk, carefully and freshly folded.

"Is that all?" said Amelia.

"That is all," replied Consuelo, "with my travelling dress. In a few days I shall make a second black dress, for a change."

"Ah! my dear child, then you are in mourning?"

"Perhaps so, signora," replied Consuelo, gravely.

"In that case forgive me. I ought to have known from your manner that you had some sorrow at your heart, and I shall love you quite as well for it. We shall sympathize even sooner; for I also have many causes of sadness, and might even now wear mourning for my intended husband. Ah! my dear Nina, do not be provoked at my gaiety; it is often merely an effort to conceal the deepest suffering." They kissed each other, and went down to breakfast, where they found the family waiting for them.

Consuelo saw, at the first glance, that her modest black dress and her white neckerchief, closed even to the chin by a pin of jet, gave the canoness a very favourable opinion of her. Old Christian was a little less embarrassed and quite as affable towards her as the evening before. Baron Frederick, who through courtesy had refrained that day from going to the chase, could not find a word to say, although he had prepared a thousand fine speeches to thank her for the attentions she would pay to his daughter. But he took a seat beside her at the table, and set himself to help her with an importunity so child-like and minute, that he had no time to satisfy his own appetite. The chaplain asked her in what order the patriarch arranged the procession at Venice, and questioned her upon the appearance and ornaments of the churches. He saw by

her answers that she had visited them frequently; and when he knew that she had learned to sing in the divine service, he testified the utmost respect for her.

As for Count Albert, Consuelo hardly dared to raise her eyes to him, precisely because he was the only one who inspired her with a lively feeling of curiosity. She did not even know what sort of a reception he had given her. Once only she looked at him in a mirror as she crossed the saloon, and saw that he was dressed with some care, although still in black. But although possessing all the distinguished appearance of a man of high birth, his untrimmed beard and hair, and pallid complexion, gave him rather the pensive and neglected air of a handsome fisherman of the Adriatic, than that of a German noble.

Still, the harmony of his voice, which pleased the musical ear of Consuelo, gave her courage by degrees to look at him, and she was surprised to find in him the air and manners of a very sensible man. He spoke little, but judiciously; and when she rose from the table, he offered her his hand, without looking at her it is true (he had not done her that honour since the day before), but with much ease and politeness. She trembled in every limb on placing her hand in that of the fantastic hero of the tales and dreams of the preceding evening, and expected to find it cold as that of a corpse. But it was soft and warm as that of a healthy man. Consuelo could hardly conceal her amazement. Her emotion gave her a sort of vertigo; and the glances of Amelia, who followed her every motion, would have completed her embarrassment, if she had not called all her powers to her aid, in order to preserve her dignity in presence of the mischievous young girl. She returned Count Albert the profound bow which he made after conducting her to a chair; but not a word, not a look, was exchanged between them.

"Do you know, perfidious Porporina," said Amelia to her companion, seating herself near her in order to whisper freely in her ear, "that you have produced a wonderful effect upon my cousin?"

"I have not perceived much of it yet," replied Consuelo.

"That is because you have not deigned to notice his manner towards me. For a whole year he has not once offered me his hand to lead me to or from the table, and now he conducts himself towards you with the most marked attention. It is true that he is in one of his most lucid moments, and one might say that you have brought him health and reason. But do not trust to appearances, Nina. It will be the same with you as it was with me: after three days of cordiality he will not even remember your existence."

"I see that I must accustom myself to your jesting," said Consuelo.

"Is it not true, my dear aunt," said Amelia, in a low voice, to the canoness, who came forward and took a seat near her and Consuelo, "that my cousin is extremely amiable towards our dear Porporina?"

"Do not jest about him, Amelia," said Wenceslawa, gently; "the young lady will soon enough perceive the cause of our sorrows."

"I am not jesting, good aunt. Albert is perfectly well this morning, and I rejoice to see him as I have never before seen him since I came here. If he were shaved and powdered like other people, you would think he had never been ill."

"His air of calmness and health strikes me very agreeably, in truth," said the canoness; "but I dare not flatter myself that so happy a state of things will last."

"What a noble and benevolent expression he has!" said Consuelo, wishing to touch the heart of the canoness in its most tender point.

"Do you think so?" said Amelia, transfixing her with a saucy and incredulous look.

"Yes, I do think so," replied Consuelo, firmly; "and as I told you yesterday evening, never did a human face inspire me with more respect."

"Ah! my dear daughter," said the canoness, suddenly casting off her constrained air, and pressing Consuelo's hand tenderly, "good hearts at once understand each other! I feared lest my poor child should terrify you. It is a source of great pain to me to read in the countenances of others the aversion inspired by such maladies. But you have great sensibility, I perceive, and have at once comprehended that in his wasted and diseased frame dwells a sublime soul, well worthy of a happier lot."

Consuelo was moved even to tears by the words of the excellent canoness, and kissed her hand affectionately. She already felt more confidence and sympathy with that old deformed lady than with the brilliant and frivolous Amelia.

They were interrupted by Baron Frederick, who relying more upon his courage than his conversational powers, approached with the intention of asking a favour from the Signora Porporina. Even more awkward in the presence of ladies than his elder brother, (this awkwardness was, it would seem, a family complaint, which one need not be much astonished to find developed, even to boorishness, in Albert,) he stammered out some words, which Amelia undertook to comprehend and translate to Consuelo.

"My father asks you," said she, "if you feel courage enough to think of music after so painful a journey, and if it would not be an imposition on your good nature, to request you to hear my voice and judge of my style?"

"With all my heart;" replied Consuelo, rising immediately and opening the harpsichord.

"You will see," said Amelia to her in a low voice, as she arranged her music on the stand, "that this will put Albert to flight, notwithstanding your good looks and mine." In fact, Amelia had hardly played a few bars, when Albert rose and went out on tip-toe, like a man who flatters himself that he is not perceived.

"It is astonishing," said Amelia, still talking in a low voice while she played out of time, "that he did not slam the door furiously after him, as he sometimes does when I sing. He is quite amiable, one might almost say gallant, to-day."

The chaplain, thinking to cover Albert's departure, approached the harpsichord and pretended to listen attentively. The rest of the family formed a half circle at a little distance, waiting respectfully for the judgment which Consuelo should pronounce upon her pupil.

Amelia courageously chose an air from the *Achille in Scyro* of Pergolese, and sang it with assurance from beginning to end in a shrill, piercing voice, accompanied by so comical a German accent, that Consuelo, who had never heard anything of the kind, was scarcely able to keep from smiling at every word. It was hardly necessary to hear four bars, to be convinced that the young baroness had no true idea and no knowledge whatever of music. She had a flexible voice, and perhaps had received good instruction; but her character was too frivolous to allow her to study anything conscientiously. For the same reason she did not mistrust her own powers, and, with German *sang froid*, attempted the boldest and most difficult passages. She failed in all, and thought to cover her unskilfulness by forcing her intonation and thundering the accompaniment, eking out the measure as she best could, by adding time to the bars which followed those in which she had diminished it, and changing the character of the music to such an extent, that Consuelo could hardly recognise what she heard, although the pages were before her eyes.

Yet Count Christian, who was a perfect connoisseur, but who attributed to his niece all the timidity he would have felt in her place, exclaimed from time to time to encourage her:— "Very well, Amelia, very well indeed! beautiful music!" The canoness, who did not know much about it, looked anxiously into the eyes of Consuelo, in order to anticipate her opinion; and the baron, who loved no other music than the flourishes of the hunting-horn, believing that his daughter sang too well for him to understand, waited in confidence for the expression of the judge's satisfaction. The chaplain alone was charmed by these *gargouillades*, which he had never heard before Amelia's arrival at the château.

Consuelo very clearly saw that to tell the plain truth would distress the whole family. Resolving to enlighten her pupil in private upon all those matters which she had to forget before she could learn anything, she praised her voice, asked about her studies, approved the chôice of masters whose works she had been made to study, and thus relieved herself from the necessity of declaring that she had studied them incorrectly.

The family separated, well pleased with a trial which had been painful only to Consuelo. She was obliged to go and shut herself up in her apartment with the music she had just

heard profaned, and read it with her eyes, singing it mentally, in order to efface the disagreeable impression she had received.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHEN the family reassembled towards evening, Consuelo, feeling more at ease with all these people whom she now began to get acquainted with, replied with less reserve and brevity to the questions, which on their part they felt more courage to address to her, respecting her country, her art, and her travels. She carefully avoided, as she had determined, speaking of herself, and she related the events in the midst of which she had lived, without ever mentioning the part she had taken in them. In vain did the curious Amelia strive to lead her to enlarge on her personal adventures. Consuelo did not fall into the snare, nor for an instant betray the incognito she had resolved to maintain. It would be difficult to say precisely why this mystery had a peculiar charm for her. Many reasons induced her to observe it. In the first place, she had promised, even sworn to Porpora, to keep herself so completely hidden and concealed in every manner, that it would be impossible for Anzoleto to discover her route, if he should attempt to pursue her—a very useless precaution, for Anzoleto, at this time after a few quickly smothered wishes of the kind, was occupied only with his debuts and his success at Venice.

In the second place, Consuelo, wishing to conciliate the esteem and affection of the family who gave her a temporary refuge in her friendless and melancholy situation, understood very well that they would much more readily receive her as a simple musician, a pupil of Porpora, and teacher of vocal music, than as prima donna, a performer on the stage, and a celebrated cantatrice. She knew that among these unpretending and pious people, an avowal of such a position would impose upon her a difficult part; and it is probable, that notwithstanding Porpora's recommendation, the arrival of Consuelo, the débutante, and the wonder of San Samuel, would have somewhat startled them. But even if these powerful motives had not existed, Consuelo would still have experienced the necessity of silence, and of keeping secret the brilliancy and the sufferings of her career. Everything was linked together in her life—her power and her weakness, her glory and her love. She could not raise the smallest corner of the veil, without laying bare one of the wounds of her soul; and these wounds were still too recent, too painful, too deep, to be healed by kindness or sympathy. She found relief only in the barrier which she had raised between the sorrowful memories of the past and the calm energy of her new existence. This change of country, of scene, and of name, transported her at once into an unknown region, where, by assuming a new character, she hoped to become a new being.

This renunciation of vanities, which might have solaced another woman, proved the salvation of this courageous being. In renouncing all compassion, as well as all human glory, she felt celestial strength come to her aid. "I must regain some portion of my former happiness," she said; "that which I so long enjoyed, and which consisted in loving and in being beloved. They moment I sought their admiration, they withdrew their love, and I have payed too dear for the honours they bestowed in place of their goodwill. Let me begin again, obscure and insignificant, that I may be subjected neither to envy, nor ingratitude, nor enmity on the earth. The least token of sympathy is sweet, and the highest testimony of admiration is mingled with bitterness. If there be proud and strong hearts to whom praise suffices, and whom triumph consoles, I have cruelly experienced that mine is not of the number. Alas! glory has torn my lover's heart from me; let humility yield me in return at least some friends."

It was not thus that Porpora meant. In removing Consuelo from Venice, and from the dangers and agonies of her love, he only intended to procure her some repose before recalling her to the scene of ambition, and launching her afresh into the storms of artistic life. He did not know his pupil. He believed her more of a woman—that is to say, more impressionable than she was. In thinking of her he did not fancy her as calm, affectionate, and busied with others, as she had already been able to become, but plunged in tears and devoured with vain regret. But he thought at the same time that a reaction would take place, and that he should find her cured of her love, and anxious to recommence the exercise of her powers, and enjoy the privileges of her genius.

The pure and religious feeling conceived by Consuelo of the part she was to play in the family of Rudolstadt, spread from this day a holy serenity over her words, her actions, and her countenance. Those who had formerly seen her dazzling with love and joy beneath the sun of Venice, could not easily have understood how she could become all at once calm and gentle in the midst of strangers, in the depths of gloomy forests, with her love blighted, both as regarded the past and the future. But goodness finds strength where pride only meets despair. Consuelo was glorious that evening, with a beauty which she had not hitherto displayed. It was not the half developed impulse of sleeping nature waiting to be roused, nor the expansion of a power which seizes the spectators with surprise or delight; neither was it the hidden, incomprehensible beauty of the *scolare zingarella*: no, it was the graceful penetrating charm of a pure and self-possessed woman, governed by her own sacred impulses.

Her gentle and simple hosts needed no other than their generous instincts to drink in, if I may use the expression, the mysterious incense which the angelic soul of Consuelo exhaled in their intellectual atmosphere. They experienced, even in

looking at her, a moral elevation which they might have found it difficult to explain, but the sweetness of which filled them as with a new life. Albert seemed for the first time to enjoy the full possession of his faculties. He was obliging and good-natured with every one. He was suitably so with Consuelo, and spoke to her at different times in such terms as showed that he had not relinquished, as might be supposed, the elevated intellect and clear judgment with which nature had endowed him. The baron did not once fall asleep, the canoness ceased to sigh, and Count Christian, who used to sink at night into his arm-chair, bent down under the weight of old age and vexation, remained erect with his back to the chimney, in the centre of his family, and sharing in the easy and pleasant conversation which was prolonged till nine in the evening.

"God has at length heard our prayers," said the chaplain to Count Christian and the canoness, who remained in the saloon after the departure of the baron and the young people. "Count Albert has this day entered his thirtieth year, and this solemn day, so dreaded by him and by ourselves, has passed over calmly and with unspeakable happiness."

"Yes, let us return thanks to God," said the old count. "It may prove but a blessed dream, sent for a moment to comfort us, but I could not help thinking all this day, and this evening in particular, that my son was perfectly cured."

"Brother," replied the canoness, "and you, worthy chaplain, I entreat pardon, but you have always believed Albert to be tormented by the enemy of human kind. For myself, I thought him at issue with opposing powers which disputed the possession of his poor soul, for often when he repeated words of the bad angel, Heaven spoke from his mouth the next moment. Do you recollect what he said yesterday evening during the storm, and his words on leaving us?—'The peace of God has come down on this house.' Albert experienced the miracle in himself, and I believe in his recovery as in the divine promise."

The chaplain was too timid to admit all at once so bold a proposition. He extricated himself from his embarrassment by saying—"Let us ascribe it to Eternal Goodness;" "God reads hidden things;" "The soul should lose itself in God;" and other sentences, more consolatory than novel.

Count Christian was divided between the desire of conforming to the somewhat exaggerated asceticism of his good sister, and the respect imposed by the prudent and unquestioning orthodoxy of his confessor.

He endeavoured to turn the conversation by speaking of the charming demeanour of Porporina. The canoness, who loved her already, praised her yet more; and the chaplain sanctioned the preference which they experienced for her. It never entered their heads to attribute the miracle which had taken place among them, to Consuelo. They accepted the benefit

without recognising its source. It was what Consuelo would have asked of God could she have been consulted.

Amelia was a closer observer. It soon became evident to her that her cousin could conceal the disorder of his thoughts from persons whom he feared, as well as from those whom he wished to please. Before relations and friends of the family whom he either disliked or esteemed, he never betrayed by any outward demonstration the eccentricity of his character. When Consuelo expressed her surprise at what had been related the preceding evening, Amelia, tormented by a secret uneasiness, tried to make her afraid of Count Albert by recitals which had already terrified herself. "Ah, my poor friend," said she, "distrust this deceitful calm; it is a pause which always intervenes between a recent and an approaching crisis. You see him to-day as I first saw him, when I arrived here in the beginning of last year. Alas! if you were destined to become the wife of such a visionary, and if, to combat your reluctance they had determined to keep you prisoner for an indefinite period in this frightful castle, with surprises, terrors, and agitations for your daily fare—nothing to be seen but tears, exorcisms, and extravagances—expecting a cure which will never happen—you would be quite disenchanted with the fine manners of Albert, and the honied words of the family."

"It is not credible," said Consuelo, "that they would unite you against your will to a man whom you do not love. You appear to be the idol of your relatives."

"They will not force me; they know that would be impossible. But they forget that Albert is not the only husband who would suit me, and God knows when they will give up the foolish hope that the affection with which I at first regarded him will return. And then my poor father, who has here wherewith to satisfy his passion for the chase, finds himself so well off in this horrible castle, that he will always discover some pretext for retarding our departure. Ah! if you only knew some secret, my dear Nina, to make all the game in the country perish in one night, you would render me an inestimable service."

"I can do nothing, unfortunately, but try to amuse you by giving you lessons in music, and chatting with you in the evenings when you are not inclined to sleep. I shall do my utmost to soothe and to compose you."

"You remind me," said Amelia, "that I have not related the remainder of the story. I shall begin at once, that I may not keep you up too late.

"Some days after his mysterious absence, which he still believed had only lasted seven days, Albert remarked the absence of the abbé, and asked where he had gone.

"'His presence was no longer necessary,' they replied; 'he returned to his own pursuits. Did you not observe his absence?'

"'I perceived,' replied Albert, 'that something was needful to complete my suffering, but I did not know what it was.'

"'You suffer much then, Albert?' asked the canoness.

"'Much;' he replied, in the tone of a man who had been asked if he had slept well.

"'And the abbé was obnoxious to you?' said Count Christian.

"'Very,' he replied, in the same tone.

"'And why, my son, did you not say so sooner? Why have you borne for so long a time the presence of a man whom you so much disliked, without informing me of it? Do you doubt, my dear child, that I should have quickly terminated your sufferings?'

"'It was but a feeble addition to my grief,' said Albert, with frightful tranquillity; 'and your goodness, which I do not doubt, my dear father, would have but slightly relieved it, by giving me another superintendent.'

"'Say another travelling companion, my son; you employ an expression injurious to my tenderness.'

"'Your tenderness was the cause of your anxiety, my father. You could not be aware of the evil you inflicted on me in sending me from this house, where it was designed by Providence I should remain till its plans for me should be accomplished. You thought to labour for my cure and repose; but I knew better what was good for us both—I knew that I should obey you—and this duty I have fulfilled.'

"'I know your virtue and your affection, Albert; but can you not explain yourself more clearly?'

"'That is very easy,' replied Albert; 'and the time is come that I should do so.'

"Albert spoke so calmly that we thought the fortunate moment had arrived when his soul should cease to be a melancholy enigma. We pressed around him, and encouraged him by our looks and caresses to open his heart for the first time in his life. He appeared at length inclined to do so, and spoke as follows:—

"'You have always looked upon me,' said he, 'and still continue to look upon me, as in ill-health and a madman. Did I not feel for you all infinite respect and affection, I should perhaps have widened the abyss which separates us, and I should have shown you that you are in a world of errors and prejudices, whilst Heaven has given me access to a sphere of light and truth. But you could not understand me without giving up what constitutes your tranquillity, your security, and your creed. When, borne away by my enthusiasm, imprudent words escaped me, I soon found I had done you harm in wishing to root up your chimeras and display before your enfeebled eyes the burning flame which I bore about with me. All the details and habits of your life, all the fibres of your heart, all the springs of your intellect, are so bound up together, so trammelled with falsehood and darkness, that I should but seem to inflict death instead of life. There is a voice, however, which cries to me in watching and in sleep, in calm and in storm,

to enlighten and convert you. But I am too loving and too weak a man to undertake it. When I see your eyes full of tears, your bosoms heave, your foreheads bent down—when I feel that I bring only sorrow and terror—I fly, I hide myself, to resist the cry of conscience and the commands of destiny. Behold the cause of my illness! Behold my torment, my cross, my suffering! Do you understand me now?'

"My uncle, my aunt, and the chaplain, understood this much—that Albert had ideas of morality and religion totally different from their own; but, timid as devout, they feared to go too far, and dared not encourage his frankness. As to myself, I was only imperfectly acquainted with the peculiarities of his childhood and youth, and I did not at all understand it. Besides, I was at this time like yourself, Nina, and knew very little of this Hussitism and Lutheranism which I have since heard so much of, whilst the controversies between Albert and the chaplain overwhelmed me with weariness. I expected a more ample explanation, but it did not ensue. 'I see,' said Albert, struck with the silence around him, 'that you do not wish to understand me, for fear of understanding too much. Be it so, then. Your blindness has borne bitter fruits. Ever unhappy, ever alone, a stranger among those I love, I have neither refuge nor stay but in the consolation which has been promised me.'

"'What is this consolation, my son?' said Count Christian, deeply afflicted. 'Could it not come from us? Shall we never understand each other?'

"'Never, my father; let us love each other, since that alone is permitted. Heaven is my witness, that our immense and irreparable disagreement has never diminished the love I bear you.'

"'And is not that enough?' said the canoness, taking one hand, while her brother pressed Albert's other hand in his own. 'Can you not forget your wild ideas, your strange belief, and live fondly in the midst of us?'

"'I do live on affection,' replied Albert. 'It is a blessing which produces good or evil, according as our faith is a common one or otherwise. Our hearts are in union, dear Aunt Wenceslawa, but our intellects are at war; and this is a great misfortune for us all. I know it will not end for centuries. Therefore I await the happiness that has been promised me, and which gives me power to hope on.'

"'What is that blessing, Albert? can you not tell me?'

"'No, I cannot tell you, because I do not know. My mother has not allowed a week to pass without announcing it to me in my sleep, and all the voices of the forest have repeated it to me as often as I have questioned them. An angel often hovers above the stone of terror, and shows me his pale and luminous face, at that ominous place, under the shade of that oak, where, when my contemporaries called me Ziska, I was transported with the anger of the Lord and became for the first time the

instrument of his vengeance; at the foot of that rock, where, when I called myself Wratislaw, I saw the mutilated and disfigured head of my father Withold stricken off by one blow of a sabre—a fearful expiation, which taught me to know sorrow and pity—a day of fatal retribution, when the Lutheran blood washed away the catholic blood, and made me a weak and tender man in the place of the man of fanaticism and destruction, which I had been a hundred years before—'

"'Divine goodness!' said my aunt, crossing herself, 'his madness has seized him again!'

"'Do not interrupt him, sister,' said Count Christian, making a great effort, 'let him explain himself. Speak, my son, what did the angel say to you upon the stone of terror?'

"'He told me that my consolation was near,' replied Albert, his face glowing with enthusiasm, 'and that it would descend upon my heart as soon as I had completed my twenty-ninth year!'

"My uncle drooped his head upon his breast. Albert seemed to allude to his death, in designating the age at which his mother died, and it appears she had often predicted that neither she nor her sons would reach the age of thirty. It seems that my aunt Wanda was also somewhat visionary, to say the least; but I have never been able to obtain any precise information on this subject. It is a very sad recollection to my uncle, and no one about him dares to awaken it.

"The chaplain endeavoured to banish the unpleasant feeling which this prediction had occasioned, by leading Albert to explain himself respecting the abbé. It was on that point the conversation had begun.

"Albert on his side made a great effort to answer him. 'I speak to you of things divine and eternal,' replied he, after a little hesitation, 'and you recall to my mind the short and fleeting concerns of time—those childish and ephemeral cares, the record of which is almost effaced within me.'

"'Speak, my son, speak!' returned Count Christian; 'we must strive to know you this day.'

"'You have never known me, father,' replied Albert, 'and you will not know me in what you call this life. But if you wish to know why I travelled, why I endured that unfaithful and careless guardian, whom you had attached to my steps like a greedy and lazy dog to the arm of a blind man, I will tell you in a few words. I had caused you enough of suffering. It was my duty to withdraw from your sight, a son rebellious to your teachings and deaf to your remonstrances. I knew well that I should not be cured of what you called my insanity; but you required both repose and hope, and I consented to remove myself. You exacted from me a promise that I would not separate, without your consent, from the guide you had given me, and that I would permit myself to be conducted by him over the world. I wished to keep my promise. I wished also that he should sustain your hope and your confidence, by

giving you an account of my gentleness and patience. I was gentle and patient. I closed my heart and my ears against him; he had the sagacity not even to think of opening them. He led me about, dressed me, and fed me like a child. I renounced the idea of fulfilling the duties of life as I thought they ought to be fulfilled. I accustomed myself to see misery, injustice, and folly reign upon the earth. I have seen men and their institutions, and indignation has given place to pity in my heart, for I have seen that the misfortunes of the oppressed were less than those of their oppressors. In my childhood I loved only the victims: now I feel charity for the executioners—melancholy penitents, who endure in this generation the punishment of crimes which they have committed in former existences, and whom God condemns to be wicked, a suffering which is a thousand times more cruel than that of being their innocent prey. This is why I now give alms only to relieve myself personally from the weight of riches, without tormenting you with my sermonizing—knowing, as I now do, that the time has not yet come for happiness, since the time for being good, to speak the language of men, is still far off.'

"'And now that you are delivered from this superintendent, as you call him, now that you can live tranquilly, without having before your eyes the spectacle of miseries which you extinguish one by one about you, without being restrained by any one in your generous disposition, can you not make an effort to banish these mental disquietudes?'

"'Do not ask me any more questions, my dear parents,' replied Albert; 'I shall not speak any more to-day.'

"He kept his word and even more: for he did not open his lips for a whole week.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"ALBERT'S history will be concluded in a few words, my dear Porporina, because, unless I repeat what you have already heard, I have not much more to tell you. The conduct of my cousin during the eighteen months which I have passed here, has been a continual repetition of the extravagancies of which I have informed you. Only Albert's pretended recollection of what he had been, and what he had seen, in past ages, assumed an appearance of frightful reality, when he began to manifest a peculiar and truly wonderful faculty of which you may have heard, but in which I did not believe until I saw the proofs he gave of it. This faculty is called, I am told, in other countries, the second sight; and those who possess it are objects of great veneration among superstitious people. As for me, who know not what to think of it, and will not undertake to give you a reasonable explanation, it only adds an additional motive to deter me from becoming the wife of a man who could see all my actions, even if I were a hundred leagues off, and who could

almost read my thoughts. Such a wife ought to be at least a saint, and how could she be one with a man who seems to have made a compact with Satan?"

"You have the happy privilege of being able to jest on every subject," said Consuelo; "I wonder at the cheerfulness with which you speak of things which make my hair stand on end. In what does this second sight consist?"

"Albert sees and hears what no one else can see and hear. When a person whom he loves is coming, although no one expects him, Albert announces his approach, and goes to meet him an hour beforehand. In the same way also he retires and shuts himself up in his chamber, when he feels that any one whom he dislikes is about to visit us.

"One day when he was walking with my father in a by-path on the mountains, he suddenly stopped and made a wide circuit through rocks and brushwood, in order not to pass near a certain place, which nevertheless presented nothing peculiar in its appearance. They returned by the same path a few moments after, and Albert again took the same precaution. My father, who observed this movement, pretended to have lost something, and endeavoured to draw him to the foot of a cedar which appeared to be the object of his repugnance. Not only did Albert avoid approaching it, but he affected even not to walk upon the shadow which the tree cast over the path; and while my father passed and repassed under it, he manifested extraordinary uneasiness and anguish. At last, my father having stopped altogether at the foot of the tree, Albert uttered a cry and hastily called him back. But he refused for a long time to explain himself respecting this fancy, and it was only when overcome by the prayers of the whole family, that he declared that the tree marked the place of a burial, and that a great crime had been committed on this spot. The chaplain thought that if Albert knew of any murder which had formerly been committed in that place, it was his duty to inform him of it, in order to give Christian burial to the abandoned bones.

"'Take care what you do,' said Albert, with an air at the same time sad and ironical, which he often assumes. 'The man, woman, and child whom you will find there were Hussites, and it was the drunkard Wenceslas who had their throats cut by his soldiers one night when he was concealed in our woods, and was afraid of being observed and betrayed by them.'

"Nothing more was said to my cousin respecting this circumstance. But my uncle, who wished to know if it was an inspiration, or merely a caprice on his part, caused a search to be made during the night at the place which my father pointed out. They found the skeletons of a man, a woman, and a child. The man was covered with one of those enormous wooden shields which the Hussites carried, and which are easily recognised by the chalice engraved upon them, with this device in Latin around it; '*O Death, how bitter is thy coming to the*

*wicked; but refreshing to him whose actions have been just, and directed with reference to thee!'**

"The bones were transferred to a more retired spot in the forest, and when, several days after, Albert passed the foot of the cedar a second time, my father remarked that he manifested no repugnance at walking on the place, which nevertheless had been again covered with stones and sand, and in which nothing appeared changed. He did not even remember the emotion he experienced on that occasion, and had some difficulty in recalling it to his mind on its being mentioned.

"'You must be mistaken,' said he to my father, 'and I must have been *warned* in some other place. I am certain there is nothing here, for I feel no cold, nor pain, nor shivering!'

"My aunt was inclined to attribute this power of divination to the special favour of Providence; but Albert is so melancholy, so tormented, so unhappy, that one can hardly think Providence would have bestowed on him so fatal a gift. If I believed in the devil, I should much sooner embrace the supposition of our chaplain, who charges all Albert's hallucinations to his account. My uncle Christian, who is a more sensible man, and firmer in his religious belief than any of the rest of us, explains many of these things very reasonably. He believes, that, notwithstanding the pains taken by the Jesuits during and after the thirty years' war, to burn all the heretical writings in Bohemia, and particularly those which were found at the Castle of the Giants, notwithstanding the minute searches made by the chaplain in every corner after the death of my aunt Wanda, some historical documents of the time of the Hussites must have remained concealed in a secret place unknown to everybody, and Albert must have found them. He thinks that the reading of those dangerous papers has vividly impressed his diseased imagination, and that he attributes to a supernatural recollection of previous existences upon earth, the impression which he then received of many details now unknown, but minutely detailed in these manuscripts. The stories he relates to us can thus be naturally explained, as well as his otherwise inexplicable disappearances for days and whole weeks; for it is as well to inform you that these have been repeated several times, and it is impossible to suppose they can be accomplished out of the chateau. Every time he has so disappeared it has been impossible to discover him, and we are certain that no peasant has ever given him refuge or nourishment. We know to a certainty that he has fits of lethargy which keep him confined to his chamber whole days. Whenever the door is broken open and much noise made around him, he falls into convulsions. Therefore they take good care not to do this, but leave him to his trance. At such moments

* "*O Mors quam est amara memoria tua hominibus injustis, viro quieto cujus omnes res fiunt ordinate et ad hoc.*' This sentence is taken from the Bible. But there the rich are named instead of the wicked, and the poor instead of the just.

Extraordinary things certainly take place in his mind; but no sound, no outward agitation betrays them, and we are only informed of them afterwards by his conversations. When he recovers from this state, he appears relieved and restored to reason; but by degrees the agitation returns and goes on increasing, until it overpowers him. It would seem that he foresees the duration of these crises; for when they are about to be long, he goes to a distance, or conceals himself in some lurking-place, which, it is supposed, must be a grotto of the mountain, or a subterranean chamber in the chateau, known to him alone. Hitherto no one has been able to discover it, and any attempt to do so is the more difficult, as we cannot watch him, and he is made dangerously ill if any one follows him, observes him, or even questions him. It has been therefore thought best to leave him entirely free, since we have come to regard these absences, which were at the commencement so terrifying, as favourable crises in his malady. When they occur, my aunt suffers the most acute anxiety, and my uncle prays, but nobody stirs; and as to myself, I can assure you I am growing very insensible on the subject. Anxiety has been succeeded by ennui and disgust, and I would rather die than marry this maniac. I admit his noble qualities; but though it may seem to you that I ought to disregard his phantasies, since they are the effect of his malady, I confess that they irritate me, and are a thorn in my life and that of my family."

"That seems to me somewhat unjust, dear Baroness," said Consuelo. "That you have a repugnance to becoming Count Albert's wife I can now understand very well; but that you should lose your interest in him, I confess I do not understand at all."

"It is because I cannot drive from my mind the idea that there is something voluntary in the poor man's madness. It is certain that he has great force of character, and that on a thousand occasions he has considerable control over himself. He can put off the attacks of his malady at will. I have seen him master them with much power, when those around him did not seem inclined to consider them in a serious light. On the contrary, whenever he sees us disposed to credulity and fear, he appears to wish to produce an effect on us by his extravagancies, and to abuse our weakness towards him. This is why I feel annoyed, and frequently long for his patron Beelzebub to come for him at once, that we may be freed from his presence."

"These are very severe witticisms," said Consuelo, "respecting so unhappy a being, and one whose mental malady seems to me more poetical and marvellous than repulsive."

"As you please, dear Porporina," returned Amelia. "Admire these sorceries as much as you will, if you can believe in them. As for me, I look upon such things in the same light as our chaplain, who recommends his soul to God, and does not take any pains to understand them. I take refuge in the

arms of reason, and excuse myself from explaining what I am sure must be capable of a very natural explanation, though at present unknown to us. The only thing certain in my cousin's miserable lot is, that his reason has entirely disappeared, and that imagination has whirled him to such a distance from earth that all his sight and sense are gone. And since I must speak plainly, and use the word which my poor uncle Christian was obliged to utter with tears, at the knees of the empress Maria-Theresa, who is not to be satisfied with half answers or half explanations—in one word, Albert of Rudolstadt is MAD: or insane, if you consider that epithet more polite."

Consuelo only answered by a deep sigh. At that instant Amelia seemed to her to be a very hateful person, and to have a heart of iron. She tried to excuse her in her own eyes, by reflecting upon what she must have suffered during eighteen months of a life so sad, and filled with such painful emotions. Then returning to her own misfortune, "Ah!" thought she, "why cannot I place Anzoleto's fault to the score of madness! If he had fallen into delirium in the midst of the intoxications and deceptions of his first appearance on the stage, I feel that I should not have loved him any less; I should only require to know that his unfaithfulness and ingratitude proceeded from insanity, to adore him as before and fly to his assistance."

Several days passed without Albert's giving, either by his manner or his conversation, the least confirmation of his cousin's assertions respecting the derangement of his mind; but one day the chaplain having unintentionally contradicted him, he began to utter some incoherent sentences, and then, as if he were himself sensible of it, rushed hastily out of the saloon and ran to shut himself up in his chamber. They thought he would remain there a long time; but an hour afterwards, he re-entered, pale and languishing, dragged himself from chair to chair, moved around Consuelo without seeming to pay any more attention to her than on other days, and ended by seeking refuge in the deep embrasure of a window, where he leaned his head on his hands, and remained perfectly motionless.

It was the hour of Amelia's music lesson, and she expressed a wish to take it, in order, as she said in a low voice to Consuelo, to drive away that gloomy figure which destroyed all her gaiety, and diffused a sepulchral odour through the apartment.

"I think," replied Consuelo, "that we had better go up to your apartment; your spinet will do for the accompaniment. If it be true that Count Albert does not like music, why augment his sufferings, and consequently those of his family?"

Amelia yielded to this last consideration, and they ascended together to her apartment, the door of which they left open, because they found it a little smoky. Amelia, as usual, wished to go on in her own way, with showy and brilliant cavatinas; but Consuelo, who began to show herself strict, made her try several simple and serious airs, taken from the religious songs of Palestrina. The young baroness yawned, became impatient,

and declared that the music was barbarous, and would send her to sleep.

"That is because you do not understand it," said Consuelo. "Let me sing some passages, to show you that it is admirably written for the voice, besides being sublime and lofty in its character."

She seated herself at the spinet, and began to sing. It was the first time she had awakened the echoes of the old château, and she found the bare and lofty walls so admirably adapted for sound, that she gave herself up entirely to the pleasure which she experienced. Her voice, long mute, since the last evening when she sang at San Samuel—that evening when she fainted, broken down by fatigue and sorrow—instead of being impaired by so much suffering and agitation, was more beautiful, more marvellous, more thrilling than ever. Amelia was at the same time transported and affrighted. She was at length beginning to understand that she did not know anything, and that perhaps she never could learn anything, when the pale and pensive figure of Albert suddenly appeared, in the middle of the apartment, in front of the two young girls, and remained motionless and apparently deeply moved until the end of the piece. It was only then that Consuelo perceived him, and was somewhat terrified. But Albert, falling on his knees, and raising towards her his large dark eyes, swimming in tears, exclaimed in Spanish, without the least German accent, "O Consuelo! Consuelo! I have at last found thee!"

"Consuelo?" cried the astonished girl, expressing herself in the same language. "Why, senor, do you call me by that name?"

"I call you Consolation," replied Albert, still speaking in Spanish, "because a consolation has been promised to my desolate life, and because you are that consolation which God at last grants to my solitary and gloomy existence."

"I did not think," said Amelia, with suppressed rage, "that music could have produced so prodigious an effect on my dear cousin. Nina's voice is formed to accomplish wonders, I confess; but I may remark to both of you, that it would be more polite towards me, and more according to general etiquette, to use a language which I can understand."

Albert appeared not to have heard a word of what his betrothed had said. He remained on his knees, looking at Consuelo with indescribable surprise and transport, and repeating in a tender voice, "Consuelo! Consuelo!"

"But what is it he calls you?" said Amelia, somewhat pettishly, to her companion.

"He is asking me for a Spanish air, which I do not know," said Consuelo, much agitated; "but I think we had better stop, for music seems to affect him deeply to-day." And she rose to retire.

"Consuelo!" repeated Albert in Spanish, "if you leave me, my life is at an end, and I will never return to earth again!"

Saying this, he fell at her feet in a swoon, and the two young girls, terrified, called the servants to carry him to his apartment, and endeavour to restore him to consciousness.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

COUNT ALBERT was laid softly upon his bed; and while one of the two domestics who had carried him searched for the chaplain, who was a sort of family physician, and the other for Count Christian, who had given orders that he should always be called at the least indisposition of his son, the two young girls, Amelia and Consuelo, went in quest of the canoness. But before either of these persons could reach the bedside of the invalid, although they made all possible haste, Albert had disappeared. They found his door open, his bed scarcely marked by the momentary repose he had taken, and his chamber in its accustomed order. They sought him everywhere, but, as always happened in similar cases, without the slightest success; after which the family sank into the sort of gloomy resignation of which Amelia had spoken to Consuelo, and seemed to await with that silent terror which they had learned to suppress, the always hoped for and always uncertain return of this singular young man.

Although Consuelo could have wished to avoid informing Albert's parents of the strange scene which had occurred in Amelia's apartment, the latter did not fail to relate the whole, and to depict in vivid colours the sudden and violent effect which Porporina's singing had produced upon her cousin.

"Then it is very certain that music affects him unfavourably," replied the chaplain.

"In that case," replied Consuelo, "I will take good care he shall not hear me; and when I am engaged with the young baroness, we will shut ourselves up so closely that no sound can reach Count Albert's ears."

"That will be a great annoyance to you, my dear young lady," said the canoness; "ah! it is not my fault that your residence here is not more agreeable."

"I wish to share both your sorrows and your joys," returned Consuelo, "and I ask no higher satisfaction than to be made a partaker of them by your confidence and your friendship."

"You are a noble girl!" said the canoness, extending to her long hand, dry and polished as yellow ivory. "But listen," added she: "I do not believe that music really does harm to my dear Albert. From what Amelia has related of this morning's occurrence, I imagine on the contrary that he experienced too vivid a delight, and perhaps his suffering arose from the too sudden cessation of your lovely melodies. What did he say to you in Spanish? That is a language which he speaks perfectly well, as he does many others which he learned in his travels with surprising facility. When we

ask him how he can retain so many different languages, he answers that he knew them before he was born, and that he merely recalls them—this one, because he spoke it twelve hundred years ago, and another, alas! for aught I know, when he was at the crusades. As we must conceal nothing from you, dear Signora, you will hear strange accounts of what he calls his anterior existences. But translate to me in our German, which you already speak so well, the meaning of the words which he said to you in your language, with which none of us here are acquainted."

Consuelo at that moment felt an embarrassment for which she could not account. Nevertheless she thought it best to tell nearly the whole truth, and explained that Albert had requested her to go on playing, and not to leave him, since she gave him much consolation.

"Consolation!" cried the quick-witted Amelia. "Did he use that word? You know, aunt, how significant it is in my cousin's mouth."

"It is, in fact, a word which he has frequently on his lips," replied Wenceslawa, "and which seems to have a prophetic meaning for him; but I see nothing on this occasion which could render the use of such a word other than perfectly natural."

"But what was that which he repeated so often, dear Porporina?" returned Amelia, pertinaciously. "He seemed to repeat a particular word to you many times, but from my agitation I am not able to remember what it was."

"I did not understand it myself," replied Consuelo, making a great effort to tell a falsehood.

"My dear Nina," said Amelia to her in a whisper, "you are quick-witted and prudent; as for me, who am not altogether stupid, I think I understand very well that you are the mystic consolation promised by the vision to Albert in his thirtieth year. Do not think to conceal from me that you understood this even better than I did; it is a celestial mission of which I am not jealous."

"Listen, dear Porporina," said the canoness, after having reflected for a few minutes; "we have always thought that Albert, when he disappeared from among us in a manner which might almost be called magical, was concealed in some place not far off—in the house perhaps—thanks to some retreat of which he alone has the secret. I know not why, but it seems to me that if you would sing at this moment he would hear you and come to us."

"If I thought so—" said Consuelo, ready to obey.

"But if Albert is near us, and the effect of music should be to increase his aberration?" remarked the jealous Amelia.

"Well," said Count Christian, "we must make the trial. I have heard that the incomparable Farinelli had the power of dissipating by his voice the gloomy melancholy of the king of Spain, as young David had that of calming the fury of Saul

by his harp. Try, generous Porporina; so pure a soul as yours must exercise a salutary influence on all around it."

Consuelo, much moved, seated herself at the harpsichord and sang a Spanish hymn in honour of Our Lady of Consolation, which her mother had taught her when a child, and which began with these words, *Consuelo de mi alma,* "Consolation of my soul," &c. She sang with so pure a voice, and with so much unaffected piety, that her hosts of the old manor-house almost forgot the object of their anxieties, and gave themselves up to sentiments of hope and of faith. A profound silence reigned both within and without the château; the doors and windows had been opened in order that Consuelo's voice might reach as far as possible, and the moon with her pale and trembling light illumined the embrasures of the vast windows. All was calm, and a sort of religious serenity succeeded to the anguish they had felt, when a deep sigh, as if breathed forth from a human breast, responded to the last sounds uttered by Consuelo. The sigh was so distinct and so prolonged, that all present, even Baron Frederick, who, half awake, turned his head as if some one had called him, heard it. All turned pale and looked at each other, as if to say, "It was not I; was it you?" Amelia could not repress a cry, and Consuelo, to whom it seemed as if the sigh proceeded from some one at her very side, though she was seated at the harpsichord apart from the rest of the family, felt so alarmed that she could not utter a word.

"Divine goodness!" said the terrified canoness, "did you hear that sigh which seemed to come from the depths of the earth?"

"Say rather, aunt," cried Amelia, "that it passed over our heads like the breath of night."

"Some owl, attracted by the light, must have flown across the apartment while we were absorbed by the music, and we have heard the fluttering of its wings at the moment it flew out through the window." Such was the opinion put forward by the chaplain, whose teeth nevertheless chattered with fear.

"Perhaps it was Albert's dog," said Count Christian.

"Cynabre is not here," replied Amelia. "Wherever Albert is, Cynabre is always with him. Some one certainly sighed here strangely. If I dared to go to the window, I would see if any one were listening in the garden; but even if my life depended on it, I have not strength sufficient."

"For a person so devoid of prejudices," said Consuelo to her in a low voice, and forcing a smile, "for a little French philosopher, you are not very brave, my dear baroness; I will try to be more so."

"Do not go, my dear," replied Amelia aloud, "nor pretend to be valiant, for you are as pale as death, and will be ill."

"What childish fancies, my dear Amelia!" said Count Christian, advancing towards the window with a grave and firm step. He looked out, saw no one, closed the sash calmly, and said, "It seems that real evils are not keen enough for the

ardent imaginations of women; they must add to them the creations of their own brains, always too ingenious in searching for causes of suffering. Certainly that sigh had nothing mysterious in it: some one of us, affected by the beautiful voice and the wonderful talent of the signora, must have breathed forth his admiration unwittingly. Perhaps it was myself, and yet I was not sensible of it. Ah! Porporina, if you should not succeed in curing Albert, at least you know how to pour celestial balm on wounds as deep as his."

The words of this pious old man, always wise and calm in the midst of the domestic misfortunes which overwhelmed him, were in themselves a celestial balm, and Consuelo felt their healing effect. She was tempted to throw herself on her knees before him, and ask his blessing; as she had received that of Porpora on leaving him, and that of Marcello on that bright and sunny day of her life, which had been the commencement of an uninterrupted succession of misfortunes.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SEVERAL days passed over without their hearing any news of Count Albert; and Consuelo, to whom this position of things appeared dismal in the extreme, was astonished to see the Rudolstadt family bear so frightful a state of uncertainty without evincing either despair or even impatience. Familiarity with the most cruel anxieties, produces a sort of apparent apathy, or else real hardness of heart, which wounds and almost irritates those minds whose sensibility has not yet been blunted by long-continued misfortune. Consuelo, a prey to a sort of nightmare in the midst of these doleful impressions and inexplicable occurrences, was astonished to see that the order of the house was hardly disturbed, that the canoness was equally vigilant, the baron equally eager for the chase, the chaplain regular as ever in the same devotional exercises, and Amelia gay and trifling as usual. The cheerful vivacity of the latter was what particularly offended Consuelo. She could not conceive how the baroness could laugh and play, while she herself could hardly read or work with her needle. The canoness, however, employed herself in embroidering an altar front for the chapel of the castle. It was a masterpiece of patience, exquisite workmanship, and neatness. Hardly had she made the tour of the house, when she returned to seat herself at her work, were it only to add a few stitches, while waiting to be called by new cares to the barns, the kitchens, or the cellars. One should have seen with how much importance these little concerns were treated, and how that diminutive creature hurried along, at a pace always regular, always dignified and measured, but never slackened, through all the corners of her little empire; crossing a thousand times each day in every direction the narrow and monotonous surface of her domestic domain. What also seemed strange to Consuelo was the

respect and admiration which the family and country in general attached to this indefatigable housekeeping—a pursuit, which the old lady seemed to have embraced with such ardour and jealous observance. To see her parsimoniously regulating the most trifling affairs, one would have thought her covetous and distrustful; and yet on important occasions she displayed a soul deeply imbued with noble and generous sentiments. But these excellent qualities, especially her maternal tenderness, which gave her in Consuelo's eyes so sympathising and venerable an air, would not of themselves have been sufficient in the eyes of the others to elevate her to the rank of the heroine of the family. She required, besides, the far more important qualification of a scrupulous attention to the trifling details of the household, to cause her to be appreciated for what she really was, notwithstanding what has been said, a woman of strong sense and high moral feeling. Not a day passed that Count Christian, the baron, or the chaplain, did not repeat every time she turned her back, "How much wisdom, how much courage, how much strength of mind does the canoness display!" Amelia herself, not distinguishing the true and ennobling purpose of life, in the midst of the puerilities which, under another form, constituted the whole of hers, did not venture to disparage her aunt under this point of view, the only one that, in Consuelo's eyes, cast a shadow upon the bright light which shone from the pure and loving soul of the hunchback Wenceslawa. To the *zingarella*, born upon the highwayand thrown helpless on the world, without any other master or any other protection than her own genius, so much care, so much activity and intensity of thought to produce such miserable results as the preservation and maintenance of certain objects and certain provisions, appeared a monstrous perversion of the understanding. She, who possessed none and desired none of the world's riches, was grieved to see a lovely and generous soul voluntarily extinguish itself in the business of acquiring wheat, wine, wood, hemp, cattle, and furniture. If they had offered her all these goods, so much desired by the greater part of mankind, she would have asked, instead, a moment of her former happiness, her rags, the clear and lovely sky above her head, her fresh young love and her liberty upon the lagunes of Venice—all that was stamped on her memory in more and more glowing colours, in proportion as she receded from that gay and laughing horizon to penetrate into the frozen sphere which is called real life!

She felt her heart sink in her bosom when at nightfall she saw the old canouesss, followed by Hans, take an immense bunch of keys, and make the circuit of all the buildings and all the courts, closing the least openings, and examining the smallest recesses into which an evil-doer could have crept; as if no one could sleep in security within those formidable walls, until the water of the torrent, which was restrained behind a neighbouring parapet, had rushed roaring into the trenches of

the château, whilst in addition the gates were locked and the drawbridge raised. Consuelo had so often slept, in her distant wanderings by the roadside, with no covering save her mother's torn cloak thrown over her for shelter! She had so often welcomed the dawn upon the snowy flagstones of Venice, washed by the waves, without having a moment's fear for her modesty, the only riches she cared to preserve! "Alas!" said she, "how unhappy are these people in having so many things to take care of! Security is the aim of their pursuits by day and night, and so carefully do they seek it, that they have no time to find or enjoy it." Like Amelia, therefore, she already pined in her gloomy prison—that dark and sombre Castle of the Giants, where the sun himself seemed afraid to penetrate. But while the young baroness only thought of fêtes, of dresses, and whispering suitors, Consuelo dreamt of wandering beside her native wave-washed shores—a thicket or a fisher-boat for her palace, the boundless heavens for her covering, and the starry firmament to gaze on!

Forced by the cold of the climate and the closing of the castle gates to change the Venetian custom which she had retained, of watching during a part of the night and rising late in the morning, she at last succeeded, after many hours of sleeplessness, agitation, and melancholy dreams, in submitting to the savage law of the cloister, and recompensed herself by undertaking, alone, several morning walks in the neighbouring mountain. The gates were opened and the bridges lowered at the first dawn of day, and while Amelia, secretly occupied in reading novels during a part of the night, slept until awakened by the first breakfast bell, the Porporina sallied forth to breathe the fresh air and brush the early dew from the herbage of the forest. One morning as she descended softly on tiptoe, in order to awaken no one, she mistook the direction she ought to take among the numberless staircases and interminable corridors of the château, with which she was hardly yet acquainted. Lost in a labyrinth of galleries and passages, she traversed a sort of vestibule, which she did not recognise, imagining she should find an exit to the garden by that way. But she merely reached the entrance of a little chapel built in a beautiful but antique style, and dimly lighted from above by a circular window of stained glass in the vaulted ceiling, which threw a feeble light upon the centre of the pavement, and left the extremities of the building in mysterious gloom. The sun was still below the horizon, and the morning grey and foggy. At first Consuelo thought herself in the chapel of the château, where she had heard mass the preceding Monday. She knew that the chapel opened upon the gardens; but before crossing it to go out, she wished to honour the sanctuary of prayer, and knelt upon the first step of the altar. But, as it often happens to artists to be preoccupied with outward objects in spite of their attempts to ascend into the sphere of abstract ideas, her prayer could not absorb her sufficiently to prevent her casting a

glance of curiosity around her; and she soon perceived that she was not in the chapel, but in a place to which she had not before penetrated. It was neither the same shrine nor the same ornaments. Although this unknown chapel was very small, she could hardly as yet distinguish objects around her; but what struck Consuelo most was a marble statue kneeling before the altar, in that cold and severe attitude in which all figures on tombs were formerly represented. She concluded that she was in a place reserved for the sepulchres of some distinguished ancestors, and having become somewhat fearful and superstitious since her residence in Bohemia, she shortened her prayer and rose to retire.

But at the moment when she cast a last timid look at the figure which was kneeling ten paces from her, she distinctly saw the statue unclasp its hands of stone, and slowly make the sign of the cross, as it uttered a deep sigh.

Consuelo almost fell backwards, and yet she could not withdraw her haggard eyes from that terrible statue. What confirmed her in the belief that it was a figure of stone was that it did not appear to hear the cry of terror which escaped from her, and that it replaced its two large white hands one upon the other, without seeming to have the least connexion with the outer world.

CHAPTER XXXV.

If the ingenious and imaginative Anne Radcliffe had found herself in the place of the candid and unskilful narrator of this veracious history, she would not have allowed so good an opportunity to escape, of leading you, fair reader, through corridors, trap-doors, spiral staircases and subterranean passages, for half-a-dozen flowery and attractive volumes, to reveal to you only at the seventh, all the arcana of her skilful labours. But the strong-minded reader whom it is our duty to please, would not probably lend herself so willingly, at the present period, to the innocent stratagem of the romancer. Besides, as it might be difficult to make her believe them, we will tell her as soon as possible the solution of all our enigmas. And to explain two of them at once, we will confess that Consuelo, after some moments of cool observation, recognised in the animated statue before her eyes, the old Count Christian who was mentally reciting his morning prayers in his oratory, and in the sigh of compunction which unwittingly escaped from him, the same unearthly sigh which she thought she had heard close beside her, on the evening when she sang the hymn to Our Lady of Consolation.

A little ashamed of her terror, Consuelo remained rooted to her place by respect, and by the fear of disturbing so fervent a prayer. Nothing could be more solemn or more touching than to see that old man, prostrate upon the stone pavement, offering his heart to God at the opening of the day, and plunged in

a sort of celestial ecstasy which appeared to close his senses to all perception of the outward world. His noble features did not betray any emotion of grief. A gentle breeze penetrating by the door which Consuelo had left open, agitated the semicircle of silvery hair which still remained upon the back part of his head, and his broad forehead, bald to the very summit, had the yellow and polished appearance of old marble. Clothed in an old-fashioned dressing-gown of white woollen stuff, which somewhat resembled a monk's frock, and which fell in large, stiff, heavy folds about his attenuated person, he had all the appearance of a monumental statue; and after he had resumed his immoveable position, Consuelo was obliged to look at him a second time, in order not to fall again into her former illusion.

After having contemplated him for some time with attention, placing herself a little on one side to see him better, she asked herself, as if involuntarily, whilst still lost in admiration and emotion, if the kind of prayer which this old man addressed to God was efficacious for the restoration of his unhappy son, and if a soul so passively submissive to the letter of his religious tenets, and to the rough decrees of destiny, had ever possessed the warmth, the intelligence, and the zeal which Albert required from a father's love. Albert too had a mystic soul; he also had led a devout and contemplative life; but from all that Amelia had related to Consuelo, and from what she had remarked with her own eyes, during the few days she had passed at the château, Albert had never found the counsel, the guide, the friend, who could direct his imagination, diminish the vehemence of his feelings, and soften the burning sternness of his virtue. She guessed that he must feel isolated, and look upon himself as a stranger in the midst of this family so determined not to contradict him, but to grieve for him in silence either as a heretic or a madman. She felt so herself from the kind of impatience she experienced at that wearying and interminable prayer addressed to Heaven, as if to transfer to it entirely the care which they themselves ought to have employed in searching for the fugitive, in finding him, in persuading him, and bringing him home. For it must have required a fearful amount of despair and grief, to withdraw so affectionate and good a young man from the bosom of his relatives, to bury him in a complete forgetfulness of self, and to deprive him even of the recollection of the uneasiness and anxiety he might occasion to those who were dearest to him.

The resolution they had taken of never opposing him, and of feigning calmness while overcome with terror, seemed to Consuelo's lofty and well-regulated mind a species of culpable negligence or gross error. There was in such a course a sort of pride and selfishness which a narrow faith inspires in those persons who consent to wear the badge of intolerance, and who believe in only one path by which they can attain to heaven, and that path rigidly marked out by the finger of the priest. "Heavenly Father," said Consuelo, with fervent de-

votion, "can this lofty soul, so warm, so charitable, so free from human passions, be less precious in thy sight than the patient and slothful spirits which submit to the injustice of the world, and see without indignation justice and truth forgotten upon the earth? Was that young man possessed by the evil one, who in his childhood gave all his toys and his ornaments to the children of the poor, and who, at the first awakening of his reflective powers, wished to deprive himself of all his wealth in order to solace human miseries? And are they, these kind and benevolent lords who weep for misfortune with barren tears, and comfort it with trifling gifts—are they wise in thinking that they are to attain to heaven by prayers and acts of submission to the emperor and the pope, rather than by righteous works and great sacrifices? No, Albert is not mad; a voice cries to me from the inmost recesses of my heart, that he is the fairest type of the just man and of the saint that has issued from the hands of nature. And if painful dreams and strange illusions have obscured the clearness of his vision—if, in short, he has become deranged as they think—it is their blind contradiction, it is the absence of sympathy, it is the loneliness of his heart, which has brought about this deplorable result. I have seen the cell in which Tasso was confined as mad, and felt that he was perhaps only exasperated by injustice. In the saloons of Venice I have heard those great saints of Christendom, whose histories have haunted my dreams in childhood, and wrung tears from my aching heart, treated as madmen; their miracles called juggleries, and their revelations frenzied dreams. But by what right do these people, this pious old man, this timid canoness, who believe in the miracles of the saints and the genius of the poets, pronounce upon their child this sentence of shame and reprobation, which should be borne only by the diseased and the wicked. Mad! no, madness is horrible and repulsive! It is a punishment from God for great crimes; and can a man become mad by the very consequence of his virtue? I thought that it was enough to suffer under the weight of undeserved evil, in order to have a claim upon the respect as well as on the pity of men. And if I myself had gone mad, if I had blasphemed on that terrible day when I saw Anzoleto at another's feet, would I therefore have lost all title to the counsels, to the encouragements, to the spiritual cares of my Christian brethren? Would they have driven me forth or left me wandering upon the highways, saying: 'There is no remedy for her; let us give her alms, and not speak to her; for since she has suffered so much she can understand nothing?' Well! it is thus that they treat this unfortunate Count Albert! They feed him, they clothe him, they take care of him, and in a word bestow upon him the alms of a childish solicitude. But they do not speak to him; they are silent when he questions them; they droop their heads or turn them away when he strives to persuade them. They let him fly, when the horror of solitude drives him into solitudes still more profound, and wait till he

returns, praying to God to watch over him and bring him back safe and well, as if the ocean were between him and the objects of his affection. And yet they think he is not far off; they make me sing to awaken him, as if he were buried in a lethargic sleep in the thickness of some wall, or in the hollow and aged trunk of some neighbouring tree. And yet they have never even thought of exploring all the secrets of this old building, they have never dug into the bowels of this excavated soil! Ah! if I were Albert's father or his aunt, I would not have left one stone upon another until I had found him; not a tree of the forest should have remained standing until they had restored him to me."

Lost in her reflections, Consuelo departed noiselessly from Count Christian's oratory, and found, without knowing how, an exit from the castle leading towards the open country. She wandered through the forest paths, and sought out the rudest and most difficult, guided by a romantic hope of discovering Albert. No common attraction, no shadow of imprudent fancy carried her onward in this venturous design.

Albert filled her imagination, and occupied her waking dreams, it is true; but in her eyes it was not a handsome young man, enthusiastically attracted towards her, whom she was seeking in those desert places, in the hope of seeing and enjoying an interview with him unobserved by spectators: it was a noble and unfortunate being whom she imagined she could save, or at least calm by the purity of her zeal. She would in the same manner have sought out a venerable hermit who required her care and assistance, or a lost child, in order to restore him to his mother. She was a child herself, and yet she enjoyed as it were a foretaste of maternal love in her simple faith, ardent charity, and exalted courage. She dreamed of and undertook this pilgrimage, as Joan of Arc had dreamed of and undertaken the deliverance of her country. It did not even occur to her that the resolution she had taken could be a subject for ridicule or blame; she could not conceive how it happened that Amelia, bound to him by the ties of blood, and in the commencement by the stronger bonds of love, should not have formed the same project and succeeded in carrying it out.

She walked forward rapidly: no obstacle deterred her. The silence of that vast forest no longer affected her mind with sadness or fear. She saw the track of wolves upon the sand, and felt no uneasiness lest she should meet the famished pack. It seemed to her that she was urged on by a divine hand which rendered her invulnerable. She knew Tasso by heart from having sung his verses every night upon the lagunes, and imagined that she was walking under the protection of his talisman, as did the generous Ubaldo to the discovery of Rinaldo through the snares of the enchanted forest. She threaded her way through the rocks and brushwood with a firm and elastic step, her brow glowing with a secret pride, and her cheeks tinged with a delicate carnation. Never had she seemed love-

lier upon the stage in her heroic characters, and yet she thought no more of the stage at this moment than she had thought of herself when she entered the theatre.

From time to time she stopped, thoughtful and reflective. "And if I should meet him suddenly," thought she, "what could I say to convince and tranquillize him? I know nothing of those mysterious and profound subjects which agitate him. I merely guess their nature, through the veil of poetry which my excited imagination, unused to their contemplation, has raised around them. I ought to possess more than mere zeal and charity, I ought to have science and eloquence, to find words worthy to be listened to by a man so much my superior—by a madman so wise when compared with all the reasonable beings amongst whom I have lived. I will go on; God will inspire me when the moment comes; for as to myself, I might search for ever, and should only lose myself more and more in the darkness of my ignorance. Ah! if I had read numberless books of religion and history, like Count Christian and the Canoness Wenceslawa! If I knew by heart all the prayers of the church, I should no doubt be able to apply some one of them appropriately to his unfortunate situation; but all my acquirements of this nature are limited to a few phrases of the catechism, imperfectly understood, and consequently imperfectly remembered, and I know not how to pray except through the medium of an anthem or a hymn. However sensitive he may be to music, I fear I shall not be able to persuade this learned theologian by a cadence or a sweet strain. No matter; it seems to me there is more power in my persuaded and resolute heart, than in all the doctrines studied by his parents, who are indeed both good and kind, but at the same time cold and wavering as the fogs and snows of their native mountains."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AFTER many turnings and windings through the inextricable mazes of the forest, which extended over a rough and hilly tract of country, Consuelo found herself on an elevation covered over with a confused heap of rocks and ruins, very difficult to be distinguished from each other, so destructive had been the hand of man, jealous of that of time. It now presented nothing but the appearance of a mountain of ruins, but had been formerly the site of a village, burned by order of the redoubtable blind man, the celebrated Calixtin chief John Ziska, from whom Albert believed himself to have descended, and perhaps was so in reality.

This ferocious and indefatigable captain having commanded his troops, one dark and dismal night, to attack the Fortress of the Giants, then guarded for the emperor by the Saxons, overheard his soldiers murmur, and one among them not far from him, say—"This cursed blind man supposes that all can do without

light as well as he." Thereupon Ziska, turning to one of the four devoted disciples who accompanied him everywhere, guiding his horse and chariot and giving him a precise account of the position and movements of the enemy, said to him with that extraordinary accuracy of memory, or principle of second sight, which in him supplied the place of vision—"There is a village near this, is there not?" "Yes, father," replied the Taborite guide, "to your right, upon a hill in front of the fortress." Ziska then summoned the discontented soldier whose murmurs had reached his ear—"My child," said he to him, "you complain of the darkness; go immediately and set fire to the village upon the hill to my right, and by the light of the flames we can march and fight." This terrible order was executed. The burning village lighted the march and attack of the Taborites. The castle of the giants was carried in two hours, and Ziska took possession of it.

At dawn the next day it was observed and made known to him, that in the midst of the ruins of the village, and at the very summit of the hill which had served the soldiers as a platform for observing the movements of the enemy, a young oak, rare in those countries and already vigorous, had remained standing and unscathed, apparently preserved from the heat of the flames around it by the water of a cistern which bathed its roots. "I know the cistern well," replied Ziska. "Ten of our number were cast into it by the accursed inhabitants of that village, and since that time the stone which covers it has not been removed. Let it remain and serve as their monument, since we are not among those who believe that wandering souls are driven from the gates of heaven by the Roman patron (Peter the key-bearer, whom they have made a saint), because their bodies rot in ground unconsecrated by the hands of the priests of Belial. Let the bones of our brothers rest in peace in that cistern. Their souls are living. They have already assumed other bodies, and those martyrs fight amongst us although we know them not. As to the inhabitants of the village, they have received their reward, and as to the oak, it has done well in defying the conflagration; a more glorious destiny than that of sheltering miscreants was reserved for it. We needed a gallows, and there it stands. Go and bring me those twenty Augustine monks whom we took yesterday in their convent, and who make a difficulty about following us. We will hang them high and dry on the branches of that brave oak, whose health such an ornament will quite restore."

It was done as soon as said. The oak from that time was called the *Hussite*, the stone of the cistern, the *Stone of Terror*, and the ruined village on the deserted hill, *Schreckenstein*.

Consuelo had heard this frightful chronicle related in all its details by the Baroness Amelia. But as she had as yet seen the theatre of it only from a distance, or by the night at the time of her arrival at the château, she would not have recog-

nised it, if, on casting her eyes below, she had not seen at the bottom of the ravine which the road crossed, the large fragments of the oak rent by the lightning, which no inhabitant of the country, and no servant of the château, had dared to cut or carry away; a superstitious fear being still attached in their minds, although after the lapse of several centuries, to this monument of horror, this contemporary of John Ziska; while the visions and predictions of Albert had invested this tragical spot with a still more repulsive character.

Thus Consuelo, on finding herself alone and unexpectedly before the Stone of Terror, upon which, overcome with fatigue, she had even seated herself, felt her courage shaken and her heart strangely oppressed. According, not only to Albert, but all the mountaineers of the country, terrible apparitions haunted the Schreckenstein, and drove from it all hunters rash enough to frequent its neighbourhood in search of game. Consequently this hill, though very near the château, was often the abode of wolves and wild animals, who found there a secure refuge against the pursuits of the baron and his hounds.

The imperturbable Frederick did not on his own account much fear being assailed by the devil, with whom moreover he would not have feared to measure himself hand to hand; but superstitious in his own way, and in cases where his favourite occupations were concerned, he was persuaded that a pernicious influence there threatened his dogs, and attacked them with unknown and incurable disorders. He had lost several of them, from having suffered them to slake their thirst in the rills of water which escaped from the veins of the hill, and which perhaps sprang from the condemned cistern, the ancient tomb of the Hussites. So he recalled, with all the authority of his whistle, his greyhound Pankin, or his slow-hound Saphyr, whenever they wandered in the neighbourhood of the Schreckenstein.

Consuelo, blushing at this feeling of cowardice which she had resolved to combat, determined to rest a moment on the fatal stone, and to retire from it only at the slow and steady pace which marks a tranquil mind in the midst of trial. But just as she turned her eyes from the blighted oak which she saw two hundred feet below her, to cast them upon surrounding objects, she saw that she was not alone upon the Stone of Terror, and that a mysterious figure had seated itself at her side without announcing its approach by the slightest noise. The figure had a large, round, and staring face, fixed on a deformed body, thin and crooked as a grasshopper's, and was dressed in an indescribable costume belonging to no age or country, the ragged condition of which amounted almost to slovenliness. Nothing in this being, save the strangeness and suddenness of its appearance, was calculated to inspire terror, for its looks and gestures were friendly. A kind and gentle smile played around the large mouth, and an infantile expression softened the wandering of mind which was betrayed by its vague look and hur-

ried gestures. Consuelo, on finding herself alone with a madman, in a place where no one could come to her assistance, certainly felt alarmed, notwithstanding numerous bows and kind smiles which the insane being addressed to her. She thought it prudent to return his salutations and motions of the head in order to avoid irritating him, but she rose as quickly as possible, and left the place, pale and trembling.

The maniac did not follow her, and made no movement to recall her; he merely climbed upon the Stone of Terror to look after her, and saluted her by waving his cap with various fantastic gestures, all the while uttering a Bohemian word which Consuelo did not understand. When she found herself at a considerable distance, she recovered sufficient courage to look at and listen to him. She already reproached herself for having felt terrified in the presence of one of those unfortunates, whom a moment before she had pitied in her heart, and vindicated from the contempt and desertion of mankind. "He is a gentle maniac," said she to herself, "perhaps made crazy by love. He has found no refuge from coldness and contempt but on this accursed rock, on which no other person would dare to dwell, and where demons and spectres are kinder to him than his fellow-men, since they do not drive him away nor trouble him in the indulgence of his moody temper. Poor creature! who laughest and playest like a child, with a grey beard and a round and shapeless back! God doubtless protects and blesses thee in thy misfortune, since he sends thee only pleasing thoughts, and has not made thee misanthropical and violent, as thou hadst a right to be!" The maniac, seeing that she walked more slowly, and seeming to understand her kind look, began to speak to her in Bohemian with great volubility; and his voice had an exceeding sweetness, a touching charm which contrasted forcibly with his ugliness. Consuelo, not understanding him, and supposing that he wanted alms, drew from her pocket a piece of money which she placed upon a large stone, after raising her arm to show it to him, and to point to him the spot where she placed it. But he only laughed louder than ever, rubbing his hands and exclaiming in bad German—"Useless, useless! Zdenko needs nothing, Zdenko is happy, very happy! Zdenko has consolation, consolation, consolation!" Then, as if he had remembered a word which he had sought for a long time in vain, he shouted with a burst of joy, and so as to be understood, though he pronounced very badly, "*Consuelo, Consuelo, Consuelo, de mi alma!*"

Consuelo stopped, astounded, and addressing him in Spanish—"Why do you call me thus?" said she; "who has taught you that name? Do you understand the language which I speak to you?" At all these questions, to which Consuelo waited in vain for an answer, the maniac did nothing but jump and rub his hands, like a man enchanted with himself; and as long as she could distinguish the sound of his voice, she heard him repeat her name in different tones, accompanied with

laughter and exclamations of joy, like a speaking bird when he tries to articulate a word which he has been taught, and which he interrupts with the warbling of his natural song.

On returning to the château, Consuelo was lost in thought. "Who, then," said she to herself, "has betrayed the secret of my disguise, so that the first savage I meet in these solitudes calls me by my own name? Can this crazy being have seen me anywhere? Such people travel; perhaps he has been in Venice at the same time as myself." She tried in vain to recall the faces of all the beggars and vagabonds she had been accustomed to see on the quays and on the Place of St. Mark, but that of the maniac of the Stone of Terror did not present itself to her memory. But as she once more crossed the drawbridge, a more logical and interesting association of ideas occurred to her mind. She resolved to clear up her suspicions, and secretly congratulated herself on not having altogether failed in her purpose in the expedition she had just concluded.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

When she again found herself full of animation and hope in the midst of the downcast and silent family, she reproached herself for the severity with which she had secretly blamed the apathy of these deeply afflicted people. Count Christian and the canoness ate almost nothing at breakfast, and the chaplain did not venture to satisfy his appetite, while Amelia appeared to be the victim of a violent fit of ill-humour. When they rose from table, the old count stopped for an instant at the window, as if to look at the gravel-walk leading to the rabbit-warren, by which Albert might return, and drooped his head sadly as if to say, "Yet another day which has begun badly, and will end in the same manner!" Consuelo endeavoured to cheer them by playing on the harpsichord some of the latest religious compositions of Porpora, to which they always listened with peculiar admiration and interest.

She was distressed at seeing them so overwhelmed with grief, and at not being able to tell them that she felt some hope. But when she saw the count take his book, and the canoness her needle, and when she was summoned to the embroidery-frame of the latter to decide whether a certain figure should have blue stitches or white in the centre, she could not prevent her thoughts from wandering to Albert, who was perhaps dying from fatigue and exhaustion in some corner of the forest, without knowing how to find his way back, or lying on some cold stone, overcome by the fearful attacks of catalepsy, and exposed to the assaults of wolves and snakes; whilst under the skilful and persevering fingers of the tender Wenceslawa, the most brilliant flowers seemed to grow in thousands on the canvass, watered sometimes by a secret but fruitless tear. As soon as she could exchange a few words with the pouting

Amelia, she inquired from her who was that deformed and crazy being who traversed the country, dressed in singular costume, laughing like a child at every one whom he met. "Ah! it is Zdenko," replied Amelia. "Did you never meet him before in your walks? One is sure of meeting him everywhere, for he has no fixed dwelling."

"I saw him this morning for the first time," said Consuelo, "and thought that he must be the tutelary genius of the Schreckenstein."

"It is there, then, that you have been walking since dawn? I begin to think you are slightly crazed yourself, my dear Nina, to wander thus at break of day through desert places, where you may encounter worse beings than the inoffensive Zdenko."

"Some hungry wolf, for instance?" replied Consuelo, laughing; "it seems to me that the carbine of the baron, your father, should shield all the country with its protection."

"I speak not merely of wild beasts," said Amelia; "the country is not so free as you imagine from the worst animals in creation, viz. brigands and vagabonds. The wars which have just ended have ruined so many families that whole tribes of beggars prowl about, sometimes going so far as to solicit alms, pistol in hand. There are also swarms of those Egyptian Zingari, whom the French have done us the honour to call Bohemians, as if they were aborigines of our mountains, instead of merely infesting them at the commencement of their appearance in Europe. These people, driven away and repulsed everywhere, although cowardly and obsequious before an armed man, might well be bold with a young girl like you; and I fear that your fancy for adventurous walks will expose you more than becomes so proper a person as my dear Porporina affects to be."

"Dear Baroness," replied Consuelo, "though you seem to consider the tusks of a wolf as a slight danger compared with those which threaten me, I confess to you that I fear them much more than I do the Zingari. The latter are old acquaintances of mine, and in general I feel it almost impossible to be afraid of poor, weak, and persecuted beings. It seems to me that I shall always know how to address those people in a way which will secure me their confidence and their sympathy; for, ugly, badly dressed, and despised as they are, it is impossible for me not to be particularly interested in them."

"Bravo, my dear!" cried Amelia, with increasing bitterness. "I see you completely share Albert's fine sentiments with regard to beggars, robbers, and foreigners; and I shall not be astonished to see you one of these mornings walking, as he does, and leaning on the rather dirty and very infirm arm of the agreeable Zdenko!"

These words were as a ray of light to Consuelo, which she had sought from the commencement of the conversation, and which consoled her for the raillery of her companion. "Count Albert then lives on good terms with Zdenko?" she asked with

an air of satisfaction which she did not even think of concealing.

"He is his most intimate, his most valued friend," replied Amelia, with a disdainful smile. "He is the companion of his walks, the confidant of his secrets, the messenger, it is said, of his correspondence with the devil. Zdenko and Albert are the only persons who would venture to repair at all hours to the Stone of Terror, and there converse on the most knotty points of divinity. Albert and Zdenko are the only persons who are not ashamed to seat themselves upon the grass with the Zingari who halt beneath our fir-trees, and partake with them the disgusting meal which those people prepare in their wooden porringers. They call that holding communion, and a very low sort of communion it certainly is. Ah! what a husband, what a fascinating lover would my cousin Albert be, when he seized the hand of his betrothed with a hand that had just pressed that of a pestiferous Zingaro, and carried it to those lips which had just drunk the wine of the chalice from the same cup with Zdenko!"

"All this may be very witty," said Consuelo, "but for my part I understand nothing of it."

"That is because you have no taste for history," returned Amelia, "and because you did not listen attentively to all that I related about the Hussites and the Protestants, during the last few days that I have been making myself hoarse explaining scientifically to you the enigmas and absurd practices of my cousin. Did I not tell you that the great quarrel between the Hussite and the Roman church arose respecting the communion in both elements? The council of Bâle decided that there was profanation in giving the blood of Christ to the laity in the element of wine, alleging—mark the beautiful reasoning!—that his body and his blood were contained equally in both elements, and that whoever ate the one drank the other. Do you comprehend?"

"It seems to me that the fathers of the council themselves did not comprehend very well. They ought to have said, if they wished to be logical, that the communion of wine was useless: but profanation? how could that be, if in eating the bread you drank the blood also?"

"It was because the Hussites had a terrible thirst for blood, and the fathers of the council knew it well. The fathers also thirsted for the blood of the people, but they wished to drink it under the element of gold. The poor people revolted, and seized, as the price of their sweat and their blood, the treasures of the abbeys and the copes of the bishops. This was the origin of the quarrel, in which mingled afterwards, as I have told you, the sentiment of national independence and the hatred of foreigners. The dispute respecting the communion was the symbol of it. Rome and her priests officiated in chalices of gold and jewels; the Hussites affected to officiate in vases of wood, in order to censure the luxury of the church

and to imitate the poverty of the apostles. This is why Albert, who has taken it into his head to become a Hussite, after these occurrences of the past have lost all value and signification, and who pretends to understand the true doctrine of John Huss better than John Huss himself, invents all sorts of communions, and goes communing on the highways with beggars and simpletons. It was the mania of the Hussites to commune everywhere, at all hours, and with all the world."

"All this is very strange," replied Consuelo, "and can only be explained to my mind by an exalted patriotism, carried in Count Albert, I must confess, even to the extent of fanaticism. The thought is perhaps profound, but the forms he clothes it in, seem to be very puerile for so serious and so learned a man. Is not the true communion more properly alms-giving? What meaning can there be in those vain ceremonies which have gone out of use, and which those whom he associates with them, certainly do not comprehend?"

"As to alms-giving, Albert is not wanting in that; and if they would give him free scope, he would soon rid himself of those riches which for my part I should be very glad to see melt away in the hands of his beggars."

"And why so?"

"Because my father would no longer entertain the fatal idea of enriching me by making me the wife of this maniac. For it is well you should know, my dear Porporina," that added Amelia, maliciously, "my family has not yet renounced that agreeable design. During these last few days, when my cousin's reason shone like a fleeting ray of sunshine from between the clouds, my father returned to the attack with more firmness than I thought him capable of exhibiting towards me. We had a very animated quarrel, the result of which seems to be that they will endeavour to overcome my resistance by the weariness of retirement, like a citadel which an enemy endeavours to reduce by famine. Therefore if I fail, if I yield to their attacks, I shall be obliged to marry Albert in spite of himself, in spite of myself, and in spite of a third person who pretends not to care the least in the world about it."

"Oh! indeed?" replied Consuelo, laughing; "I expected that epigram, and you only granted me the honour of conversing with you this morning in order to arrive at it. I receive it with pleasure, because I see in this little pretence of jealousy, the remains of a warmer affection for Count Albert than you are willing to acknowledge."

"Nina!" cried the young baroness, energetically, "if you imagine you see that, you have but little penetration, and if you see it with pleasure, you have but little affection for me. I am violent, perhaps proud, but certainly not in the habit of dissembling. I have already told you the preference which Albert gives to you irritates me against him, not against you. It wounds my self-love, but it flatters my hope and my inclination. It makes me long that he would, for your sake,

commit some great folly which would free me from all circumspection with regard to him, by justifying the aversion against which I have long struggled, and which I now feel for him without any mixture of pity or love."

"May God grant," replied Consuelo, gently, "that this is the language of passion and not of truth! For it would be a very harsh truth in the mouth of a very cruel person."

The bitterness which Amelia testified in these conversations made little impression upon Consuelo's generous mind. A few seconds afterwards, she thought only of her enterprise, and the dream which she cherished of restoring Albert to his family diffused a kind of pure-hearted joy over the monotony of her occupations. She required this excitement to dissipate the *ennui* which threatened her, and which being the malady most opposed and hitherto most unknown to her active and energetic nature, would certainly have been fatal to it. In fact, when she had given her unruly and inattentive pupil a long and tiresome lesson, she had nothing more to do but to exercise her voice and to study her ancient authors. But this consolation, which hitherto had never failed her, was now obstinately disputed. Amelia, with her restless frivolity, came every moment to interrupt and trouble her by childish questions and unseasonable observations. The rest of the family were in deep dejection. Already five long weary days had passed without the reappearance of the young count, and every day of his absence added to the gloom and depression of the preceding one.

In the afternoon, Consuelo, while wandering through the garden with Amelia, saw Zdenko on the other side of the moat which separated them from the open country. He seemed busy talking to himself, and from the tone of his voice one would have said he was relating a history. Consuelo stopped her companion, and asked her to translate what the strange personage was saying.

"How can you expect me to translate reveries without connexion and without meaning?" said Amelia, shrugging up her shoulders. "This is what he has just mumbled, if you are very desirous of knowing: 'Once there was a great mountain, all white, all white, and by its side a great mountain, all black, all black, and by its side a great mountain, all red, all red.' Does that interest you very much?"

"Perhaps it might, if I could know what follows. Oh! what would I not give to understand Bohemian! I must learn it."

"It is not nearly so easy as Italian or Spanish, but you are so studious that you will quickly master it if you wish; I will teach you, if that will at all gratify you."

"You are an angel. On the condition, however, that you are more patient as a mistress than as a pupil. And now what does Zdenko say?"

"Now the mountains are speaking—

"'Why, O red, all red mountain, hast thou crushed the

mountain all black? And why, O white, all white mountain, hast thou permitted the black, the all black mountain to be crushed?'"

Here Zdenko began to sing with a thin and broken voice, but with a correctness and sweetness which penetrated Consuelo's very soul. His song was as follows:—

"O black mountains and white mountains, you will need much water from the red mountain to wash your robes;

"Your robes, black with crimes and white with idleness; your robes stained with lies and glittering with pride.

"Now they are both washed, thoroughly washed, your robes that would not change colour; they are worn, well worn, your robes that would not drag along the road.

"Now all the mountains are red, very red! It will need all the water of heaven, all the water of heaven, to wash them."

"Is that improvised, or is it an old Bohemian air?" asked Consuelo of her companion.

"Who knows?" replied Amelia; "Zdenko is either an inexhaustible improvisatore or a very learned rhapsodist. Our peasants are passionately fond of hearing him, and respect him as a saint, considering his madness rather as a gift from Heaven than as a malady of the mind. They feed and cherish him, and it depends upon himself alone to be the best lodged and the best dressed man in the country, for every one desires the pleasure and the advantage of having him for a guest. He passes for a bearer of good luck, a harbinger of fortune. When the weather is threatening, if Zdenko happen to pass they say, 'Oh! it will be nothing; the hail will not fall here.' If the harvest is bad, they ask Zdenko to sing; and as he always promises years of abundance and fertility, they are consoled for the present by the expectation of a more favourable future. But Zdenko is unwilling to dwell anywhere; his wandering nature carries him to the deepest recesses of the forests. No one knows where he is sheltered at night, nor where he finds a refuge against the cold and the storms. Never, for the last ten years, has he been seen to enter under any other roof than that of the Castle of the Giants, because he pretends that his ancestors are in all the other houses of the country, and that he is forbidden to present himself before them. Nevertheless, he follows Albert to his apartment, for he is as devoted and submissive to Albert as his dog Cynabre. Albert is the only living being who can at will enchain his savage independence, and by a word put a stop to his unquenchable gaiety, his eternal songs, and his indefatigable babble. Zdenko formerly had, it is said, a very fine voice, but he has worn it out by talking, singing, and laughing. He is not older than Albert, though he looks like a man of fifty, and they were companions in childhood. At that time Zdenko was only half crazed. Descended from an ancient family (one of his ancestors makes a considerable figure in the war of the Hussites), he evinced sufficient memory and quickness to induce his

parents, taking into view his want of physical strength, to destine him for the cloister. For a long time he wore the dress of a novice in one of the mendicant orders, but they could never succeed in making him submit to their rules; and when he was sent on a circuit with one of the brothers of his convent, and an ass to be loaded with the gifts of the faithful, he would leave the wallet, the ass, and the brother in the lurch, and wander off to take a long vacation in the depths of the forest. When Albert departed on his travels, Zdenko fell into a low and melancholy state, threw off his frock, and became a complete vagabond. His melancholy disappeared by degrees, but the glimmering ray of reason, which had always shone amidst the oddities of his character, was entirely extinguished. He no longer talked except incoherently, displayed all sorts of incomprehensible manias, and became really crazy. But as he always continued sober, mild, and inoffensive, he may be termed rather idiotic than mad. Our peasants call him nothing else but *the innocent.*"

"What you tell me of this poor man inspires me with a warm sympathy for him," said Consuelo; "I wish I could talk to him. He knows a little German, does he not?"

"He understands it, and can speak it tolerably well. But, like all Bohemian peasants, he has a horror of the language; and besides, when he is absorbed in his reveries, as he is now, it is very doubtful if he will answer when you question him."

"Then make an effort to speak to him in his own language, and to attract his attention to us," said Consuelo.

Amelia called Zdenko several times, asking him in Bohemian if he were well, and if he were in need of anything; but she could not once induce him to raise his head, which was bent toward the earth, nor to interrupt a little play he was carrying on with three pebbles, one white, one red, and one black, which he threw at each other, laughing with great glee every time he knocked them down.

"You see it is quite useless," said Amelia. "When he is not hungry, or is not looking for Albert, he never speaks to us. In one or the other of those cases, he comes to the gate of the castle, and if he is only hungry he remains at the gate. They then give him what he wants; he thanks them and goes away. If he wishes to see Albert, he enters, goes and knocks at the door of his chamber, which is never closed to him, and there he will remain for whole hours, silent and quiet as a timid child if Albert is at work, talkative and cheerful if Albert is disposed to listen to him, but never irksome, it would seem, to my amiable cousin, and more fortunate in that respect than any member of the family."

"And when Count Albert is invisible, as he is at this moment for instance, does Zdenko, who loves him so ardently—Zdenko, who lost all his gaiety when the count set out on his travels—Zdenko, his inseparable companion, remain tranquil? Does he show no uneasiness?"

"None whatever. He says that Albert has gone to see the great God, and that he will soon return. That was what he said when Albert was travelling over Europe, and when he had become reconciled to his absence."

"And do you not suspect, dear Amelia, that Zdenko may may have a better foundation than all of you for this apparent security? Has it never occurred to you that he might be in Albert's confidence, and that he watches over him in his delirium or lethargy?"

"We did indeed think so, and for a long time watched all his proceedings; but like his patron, Albert, he detests all watching, and, more crafty than a fox when hunted by the dogs, he circumvented all our efforts, baffled all our attempts, and rendered useless all our observations. It would seem that he has, like Albert, the gift of making himself invisible when he pleases. Sometimes he has disappeared instantaneously from the eyes which were fixed upon him, as if he had cloven the earth that it might swallow him up, or as if a cloud had wrapped him in its impenetrable veil. At least this is what is affirmed by our people, and by my aunt Wenceslawa herself, who, notwithstanding all her piety, has not a very strong head as regards Satanic influences."

"But you, my dear Baroness, cannot believe in these absurdities?"

"For my part, I agree with my uncle Christian. He thinks that if Albert, in his mysterious sufferings, relies solely on the succour and help of this idiot, it would be very dangerous to interfere with him in any way, and that by watching and thwarting Zdenko's movements, there is a risk of depriving Albert for hours, and perhaps for whole days, of the care and even of the nourishment which he may receive from him. But for mercy's sake let us go on, dear Nina; we have bestowed sufficient time on this matter, and yonder idiot does not excite in me the same interest that he does in you. I am tired of this romances and his songs, and his cracked voice almost gives me a sore throat from sympathy."

"I am astonished," said Consuelo, as she suffered herself to be drawn away by her companion, "that his voice has not an extraordinary charm in your ears. Broken as it is, it makes more impression on me than that of the greatest singers."

"Because you are sated with fine voices, and novelty amuses you."

"The language which he sings has to my ears a peculiar sweetness," returned Consuelo, "and his melodies have not the monotony you seem to imagine; on the contrary, they contain very refined and original ideas."

"Not for me, who have been beset by them," replied Amelia. "At first I took some interest in the words, thinking, as do the country people, that they were ancient national songs, and curious in a historical point of view; but as he never repeats them twice in the same manner, I feel certain they are im-

provisations, and I was soon convinced that they were not worth listening to, although our peasants imagine they find in them a symbolical sense which pleases them."

As soon as Consuelo could get rid of Amelia, she ran back to the garden, and found Zdenko in the same place, on the outside of the moat and absorbed in the same play. Convinced that this unfortunate being had secret relations with Albert, she had stealthily entered the kitchen and seized a cake made of honey and fine flour, carefully kneaded by the canoness with her own hands. She remembered having seen Albert, who ate very sparingly, show an instinctive preference for this dainty, which his aunt always prepared for him with the greatest care. She wrapped it up in a white handkerchief, and meaning to throw it across the moat to Zdenko, she called to him. But as he appeared not to wish to listen to her, she remembered the vivacity with which he had uttered her name, and she therefore pronounced it in German. Zdenko seemed to hear it; but he was at that moment in one of his melancholy moods, and without looking up, he repeated in German, shaking his head and sighing, "Consolation! Consolation!" as if he would have said, "I have no further hope of consolation."

"Consuelo!" then said the young girl, wishing to see if her Spanish name would reawaken the joy he had shown on pronouncing it in the morning.

Immediately Zdenko abandoned his pebbles, and began to leap and gambol upon the bank of the moat, throwing up his cap into the air, and stretching out his arms to her, uttering some very animated Bohemian words with a face radiant with pleasure and affection.

"Albert," cried Consuelo to him again, as she threw the cake across the moat.

Zdenko seized it, laughing, and did not unfold the handkerchief; but he said many things which Consuelo was in despair at not being able to understand. She tried to remember one phrase in particular, which he repeated several times, accompanying it by numerous bows and greetings. Her musical ear helped her to seize the exact pronunciation, and as soon as she lost sight of Zdenko, who ran off at full speed, she wrote it upon her tablets, with the Venetian orthography, intending to ask Amelia for its meaning. But before leaving Zdenko she wished to give him something that would testify in the most delicate manner to Albert the interest she felt for him, and having recalled the crazy being, who came back obedient to her voice, she threw him a bouquet of flowers which she had gathered an hour before in the green-house, and which, still fresh and fragrant, were fastened to her girdle. Zdenko seized it, repeated his salutations, renewed his exclamations and gambols, and then burying himself in the dense thicket, where it would have seemed that only a hare could force a passage, disappeared entirely. Consuelo followed his rapid flight for a few moments with her eyes, by marking the tops of the

branches as they moved in a south-easterly direction; but a light wind which sprang up rendered her observation useless, by agitating all the branches of the coppice, and she re-entered the château, more than ever bent upon the prosecution of her design.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHEN Amelia was asked to translate the phrase which Consuelo had written upon her tablets and engraved in her memory, she replied that she did not understand it at all, although she could render it literally by these words:—

"*May he who has been wronged salute thee.*"

"Perhaps," added she, "he refers to Albert or himself, and means that wrong has been done them in accusing them of madness, as they consider themselves the only sensible men on the face of the earth. But what good can it do to seek for the meaning of a madman's talk? This Zdenko occupies your imagination much more than he deserves."

"It is the custom of the peasantry in all countries," replied Consuelo, "to attribute to the insane a kind of inspiration, higher than that enjoyed by cold and settled minds. I have a right to retain the prejudices of my class, and I confess I can never believe that a madman speaks at random when he utters words which are unintelligible to us."

"Let us see," said Amelia, "if the chaplain, who is deeply versed in all the ancient and modern sayings which our peasants use, knows the meaning of this." And running to the good man, she asked him for an explanation of Zdenko's words.

But these obscure words seemed to strike the chaplain with a frightful light. "In the name of the living God," cried he, turning pale, "where can your ladyship have heard such blasphemy?"

"If it be such, I cannot understand its meaning," replied Amelia, laughing; "and therefore I await your explanation."

"Word for word, it is in good German exactly what you have just said, madam—'*May he who has been wronged salute thee.*' But if you wish to know the meaning (and I hardly dare to utter it), it is, in the thought of the idolater who pronounced it—'*May the devil be with thee.*'"

"In other words," returned Amelia, laughing still more heartily, "'*Go to the devil.*' Well, it is a pretty compliment; and this is what you gain, my dear Nina, from talking with a fool. You did not think that Zdenko, with so affable a smile and such merry grimaces, would utter so ungallant a wish."

"Zdenko!" cried the chaplain. "Ah! then it is that unfortunate idiot who makes use of such sayings? I am glad it is no worse—I trembled lest it should be some other person. But I was wrong—it could proceed only from a brain crammed with the abominations of the ancient heresies. Whence can

he have learned things almost unknown and forgotten now-a-days? The spirit of evil alone can have suggested them to him."

"But, after all, it is only a very vulgar oath which the common people use in all countries," returned Amelia; "and Catholics are no more shocked by it than others."

"Do not think so, Baroness," said the chaplain. "It is not a malediction in the wandering mind of him who uses it; on the contrary, it is a homage, a benediction—and there is the sin. This abomination comes from the Lollards, a detestable sect, which engendered that of the Vaudois, which engendered that of the Hussites ——"

"Which engendered many others," said Amelia, assuming a grave air to mock the good priest. "But come, Mr. Chaplain, explain to us how it can be a compliment to recommend one's neighbour to the devil."

"The reason is, that in the opinion of the Lollards, Satan was not the enemy of the human race, but on the contrary its protector and patron. They held that he was a victim to injustice and jealousy. According to them the Archangel Michael, and the other celestial powers who had precipitated him into the abyss, were the real demons, while Lucifer, Beelzebub, Ashtaroth, Astarte, and all the monsters of hell, were innocence and light themselves. They believed that the reign of Michael and his glorious host would soon come to an end, and that the devil would be restored and reinstated in heaven, with his accursed myrmidons. In fine, they paid him an impious worship, and accosted each other by saying, '*May he who has been wronged*'—that is to say, he who has been misunderstood and unjustly condemned—'*salute thee*'—that is, protect and assist thee."

"Well," said Amelia, bursting into a fit of laughter, "my dear Nina is certainly under very favourable guardianship, and I should not be astonished if we should soon have to apply exorcisms to destroy the effect of Zdenko's incantations upon her."

Consuelo was somewhat disturbed at this raillery. She was not quite certain that the devil was a chimera and hell a poetic fable. She would have been induced to share the chaplain's indignation and affright, if, provoked at Amelia's laughter, he had not been at the moment perfectly ridiculous. Confused and disturbed in all her earliest belief by this contest between the superstition of the one party and the incredulity of the other, Consuelo that evening could hardly say her prayers. She inquired into the meaning of all those forms of devotion which she had hitherto received without examination, and which no longer satisfied her alarmed mind. "From what I have been able to see," thought she, "there are two kinds of devotion at Venice—that of the monks, the nuns, and the people, which goes perhaps too far; for it accepts, along with the mysteries of religion, all sorts of additional

superstitions, such as the *orco* (the demon of the lagunes), the sorceries of Malamocco, the gold-seekers, the horoscope, and vows to saints for the success of designs, far from pious, and often far from honest. Then there is that of the higher clergy and of the fashionable world, which is only a pretence; for these people go to church as they go to the theatre—to hear the music and show themselves; they laugh at everything and examine nothing, in religion, thinking that there is nothing serious or binding on the conscience in it, and that it is all a matter of form and habit. Anzoleto was not in the least religious; that was one source of grief to me, and I was right to look upon his unbelief with terror. My master Porpora, again—what did he believe? I know not. He never explained himself on that point, and yet he spoke to me of God and of Divine things at the most sorrowful and the most solemn moment of my life. But though his words struck me forcibly, the only impression they left was one of terror and uncertainty. He seemed to believe in a jealous and absolute God, who sends inspiration and genius only to those who are separated by their pride from the sufferings and the joys of their race. My heart regrets this fierce religion, and could not adore a God who should forbid me to love. Which then is the true God? Who will show him to me? My poor mother was a believer, but with how many childish idolatries was her worship mingled! What am I to believe?—what am I to think? Shall I say, like the thoughtless Amelia, that reason is the only God? But she does not know even that God, and cannot show him to me, for there is no one less reasonable than she. Can one live without religion? Of what use then would life be? For what object could I labour? To what purpose should I cherish pity, courage, generosity, a sense of right—I, who am alone in the universe—if there be not in that universe a Supreme Being, omniscient and full of love, who judges, who approves, who aids, who preserves and blesses me? What strength, what excitement, can those have in life, who can dispense with a hope and a love beyond the reach of human illusions and worldly vicissitudes?

"Supreme Being!" cried she in her heart, forgetting the accustomed form of her prayer, "teach me what I ought to do. Infinite Love! teach me what I ought to love. Infinite Wisdom! teach me what I ought to believe."

While thus praying and meditating, she forgot the flight of time, and it was past midnight, when before retiring to bed she cast a glance over the landscape now lighted by the moon's pale beams. The view from her window was not very extensive, owing to the surrounding mountains, but exceedingly picturesque. A narrow and winding valley, in the centre of which sparkled a mountain stream, lay before her, its meadows gently undulating until they reached the base of the surrounding hills, which shut in the horizon, except where at intervals they opened to permit the eye to discover still more distant and

steeper ranges, clothed to the very summit with dark green firs. The last rays of the setting moon shone full on the principal features of this sombre but striking landscape, to which the dark foliage of the evergreens, the pent-up water, and the rocks covered with moss and ivy, imparted a stern and savage aspect.

While comparing this country with all those she had traversed in her childhood, Consuelo was struck with an idea that had not before occurred to her; viz. that the landscape before her was not altogether new to her, whether she had formerly passed through this part of Bohemia, or seen elsewhere places very similar. "We travelled so much, my mother and I," said she to herself, "that it would not be astonishing if I had already been here. I have a distinct recollection of Dresden and Vienna, and we may have crossed Bohemia in going from one of those cities to the other. Still it would be strange if we had received hospitality in one of the out houses of this very castle in which I am now lodged as a young lady of consequence; or if we had by our ballads earned a morsel of bread at the door of some one of those cabins, where Zdenko now stretches out his hand for alms and sings his ancient songs—Zdenko, the wandering artist, who is my equal and fellow, although he no longer seems so."

Just at that moment her eyes were directed towards the Schreckenstein, the summit of which could be perceived above a nearer eminence, and it seemed to her that this fearful spot was crowned by a reddish light which faintly tinged the transparent azure of the sky. She fixed her attention upon it, and saw the flickering light increase, become extinct, and reappear, until at last it shone so clear and decided that she could not attribute it to an illusion of her senses. Whether it was the temporary retreat of a band of Zingari, or the haunt of some brigand, it was not the less certain that the Schreckenstein was occupied at that moment by living beings; and Consuelo, after her simple and fervent prayer to the God of truth, was no longer disposed to believe in the existence of the fantastic and evil-minded spirits with which the popular tradition peopled the mountain. But was it not more probably Zdenko who had kindled the fire, to shield himself from the cold of the night? And if it were Zdenko, was it not to warm Albert that the dried branches of the forest were burning at that moment? This luminous appearance was often seen upon the Schreckenstein: it was spoken of with terror, and attributed to something supernatural. It had been said a thousand times that it emanated from the enchanted trunk of Ziska's old oak. But the *Hussite* no longer existed; at least it lay at the bottom of the ravine, and the red light still shone on the summit of the mountain. Why did not this mysterious light-house induce them to institute a search there for the supposed retreat of Albert?

"Oh, apathy of devout minds!" thought Consuelo; "are you

a boon of Providence, or an infirmity of weak and imperfect natures?" She asked herself at the same time if she should have the courage to go alone at that hour to the Schreckenstein; and she decided that, actuated by benevolence and charity, she could dare all. But she could adopt this flattering conclusion with perfect safety, as the strict closing of the château left her no opportunity of executing her design.

In the morning she awoke full of zeal, and hurried to the Schreckenstein. All was silent and deserted. The grass was untrodden around the Stone of Terror; there was no trace of fire, no vestige of the presence of last night's guests. She wandered over the mountain in every direction, but found nothing which could indicate their presence. She called Zdenko on every side; she tried to whistle, in order to see if she could awaken the barkings of Cynabre, and shouted her own name several times. She uttered the word "consolation" in all the languages she knew; she sang some strains of her Spanish hymn, and even of Zdenko's Bohemian air, which she remembered perfectly. But in vain. The crackling of the dried lichens under her feet, and the murmuring of the mysterious waters which ran beneath the rocks, were the only sounds that answered her.

Fatigued by this useless search, she was about to retire after having taken a moment's rest upon the stone, when she saw at her feet a broken and withered rose-leaf. She took it up, examined it, and after a moment's reflection felt convinced that it must be a leaf of the bouquet she had thrown to Zdenko, for the mountain did not produce wild roses, even if it had been the season for them, and as yet there were none in flower except in the green-house of the château. This faint indication consoled her for the apparent fruitlessness of her walk, and left her more than ever convinced that it was at the Schreckenstein they must hope to find Albert.

But in what cave of this impenetrable mountain was he concealed? He was not then always there, or perhaps he was at that moment buried in a fit of cataleptic insensibility; or rather perhaps Consuelo had deceived herself when she attributed to her voice some power over him, and the veneration he had professed for her was but a paroxysm of his madness which had left no trace in his memory. Perhaps at this very moment he saw and heard her, laughed at her efforts, and despised her useless attempts.

At this last thought Consuelo felt a burning blush mount to her cheeks, and she hastily left the Schreckenstein, almost resolving never to return there. However, she left a little basket of fruit which she had brought with her.

But on the morrow she found the basket in the same place, untouched. Even the leaves which covered the fruit had not been disturbed by any curious hand. Her offering had been disdained, or else neither Albert nor Zdenko had been there; and yet the ruddy light of a fire of fir branches had again

shone the previous night upon the summit of the mountain. Consuelo had watched until daylight in order to observe it closely. She had several times seen the brightness diminish, and then increase, as if a vigilant hand had supplied nourishment to the flame. No one had seen any Zingari in the neighbourhood. No stranger had been remarked in the paths of the forest; and all the peasants whom Consuelo questioned respecting the luminous appearance of the Stone of Terror, answered her in bad German, that it was not good to search into those things, and that people ought not to interfere in the affairs of the other world.

Nine days had now elapsed since Albert had disappeared. This was the longest absence of the kind that had ever taken place, and this protracted delay, united to the gloomy omens which had ushered in his thirtieth birthday, was not calculated to revive the hopes of the family. At last they began to be seriously alarmed: Count Christian did nothing but utter heart-breaking sighs; the baron went to hunt without a thought of killing anything; the chaplain offered up an extra number of prayers; Amelia no longer dared to laugh or converse as usual; and the canoness, pale and weak, unable to pursue her household cares, and forgetful of her tapestry work, told her beads from morning till night, kept little tapers burning before the image of the Virgin, and seemed stooped lower by a foot than usual. Consuelo ventured to propose a thorough and careful examination of the Schreckenstein, related what researches she had made there, and mentioned to the canoness privately the circumstance of the rose-leaf, and the careful watch which she had kept all night on the luminous summit of the mountain. But the preparations which Wenceslawa proposed to make for the search, soon caused Consuelo to repent of having spoken so frankly. The canoness wished to have Zdenko seized and terrified by threats, to equip and provide fifty men with torches and muskets, and whilst the chaplain should pronounce his most terrible exorcisms upon the fatal stone, that the baron, followed by Hans and his most courageous attendants, should institute a regular siege of the Schreckenstein in the middle of the night. To surprise Albert in this manner would be the sure way to throw him into a state of derangement, and perhaps even of violent frenzy; and Consuelo, therefore, by force of arguments and prayers, prevailed upon Wenceslawa not to take any step without her advice. What she proposed was, to leave the château the following night, and accompanied only by the canoness, and followed at a distance by Hans and the chaplain only, to examine the fire of the Schreckenstein on the spot. But this resolution was beyond the strength of the canoness. She was firmly persuaded that an assembly of demons was held on the Stone of Terror, and all that Consuelo could obtain was, that the drawbridge should be lowered at midnight, and that the baron with some other volunteers should follow her, without arms and in

the greatest silence. It was agreed that this attempt should be concealed from Count Christian, whose great age and feeble health unfitted him for such an expedition in the cold and unwholesome night air, and who would yet wish to join it if he were informed. All was executed as Consuelo desired. The baron, the chaplain, and Hans accompanied her. She advanced alone, a hundred steps in front of her escort, and ascended the Schreckenstein with a courage worthy of Bradamante. But in proportion as she approached, the brightness, which seemed to issue in rays from the fissures of the rock was extinguished by degrees, and when she reached the summit, profound darkness enveloped the mountain from the summit to the base. A deep silence and gloomy solitude reigned all around. She called Zdenko, Cynabre, and even Albert, although in uttering the latter name her voice trembled. All was mute, and echo alone answered her unsteady voice.

She returned towards her companions completely disheartened. They praised her courage to the skies, and ventured in their turn to explore the spot she had just quitted, but without success; and all returned in silence to the château, where the canoness, who waited for them at the gate, felt her last hope vanish at their recital.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Consuelo, after receiving the thanks of the good Wenceslawa, and the kiss which she imprinted upon her forehead, proceeded towards her apartment cautiously, in order not to awaken Amelia, from whom the enterprise had been concealed. She slept on the first floor, while the chamber of the canoness was in the basement story. But in ascending the stairs she let her light fall, and it was extinguished before she could recover it. She thought she could easily find her way without it, especially as the day began to dawn; but whether from absence of mind, or that her courage, after an exertion too great for her sex, abandoned her of a sudden, she was so much agitated that on reaching the story on which her apartment was situated, she did not stop there, but continued to ascend to the upper story, and entered the gallery leading to Albert's chamber, which was situated almost immediately over hers. But she stopped, chilled with affright, at the entrance of the gallery, on seeing a thin dark form glide along before her, as if its feet did not touch the floor, and enter the chamber towards which Consuelo was hastening under the idea that it was her own. In the midst of her terror she had presence of mind enough to examine this figure, and to ascertain by a rapid glance in the indistinct light of the dawn that it wore the form and dress of Zdenko. But what was he going to do in Consuelo's apartment at such an hour, and with what message could he have been entrusted for her? She did not feel disposed to encounter such a tête-à-tête, and descended the stairs to seek the canon-

ess; but upon reaching the flight below she recognised her corridor and the door of her apartment, and perceived that it was Albert's into which she had just seen Zdenko enter.

Then a thousand conjectures presented themselves to her mind, which had now become somewhat composed. How could the idiot have penetrated at night into a castle so well guarded and so carefully examined every evening by the canoness and the domestics? This apparition of Zdenko confirmed her in the idea which she had always entertained, that there was some secret outlet from the château, and perhaps a subterranean communication with the Schreckenstein. She ran to knock at the door of the canoness, who was shut up in her gloomy cell, and who uttered a loud cry on seeing her appear without a light, and somewhat pale. "Be not disturbed, my dear madam," said the young girl; "I have just met with a strange occurrence, but one which need not terrify you in the least. I have just seen Zdenko enter Count Albert's chamber."

"Zdenko! you must be dreaming, my child; how could he have got in? I closed all the gates with the same care as usual, and during the whole of your trip to the Schreckenstein I kept good guard; the bridge was raised, and when you had all crossed it on your return, I remained behind to see it raised again."

"However that may be, madam, Zdenko is nevertheless in Count Albert's chamber. You have only to go there to be convinced of it."

"I will go immediately," replied the canoness, "and drive him out as he deserves. The wretched creature must have come in during the day. But what object could he have in coming here? Most probably he is looking for Albert, or has come to wait for him—a sure proof, my poor child, that he knows no more where he is than we do ourselves."

"Well, let us question him, however," said Consuelo.

"In one instant," said the canoness, who in preparing for bed had taken off two of her petticoats, and who considered herself too lightly dressed with the remaining three; "I cannot present myself thus before a man, my dear. Go and look for the chaplain or my brother the baron, whichever you can find first—we must not expose ourselves alone before this crazy man. But what am I thinking of?—a young person like you cannot go and knock at the doors of these gentlemen. Wait a moment, I will hurry; I shall be ready in an instant."

And she began to rearrange her dress; the more slowly because she was hurried, and because, her regular habits being deranged, she hardly knew what she was about. Consuelo, impatient at so long a delay, during which Zdenko might have time to leave Albert's chamber, and hide himself in the castle so that he could not be found, recovered all her energy. "Dear madam," said she, lighting a candle, "will you please to call the gentlemen? I will go in the mean time and see that Zdenko does not escape us."

She mounted the two flights hastily, and with a courageous hand opened Albert's door, which yielded without resistance; but she found the apartment deserted. She entered a neighbouring cabinet, raised all the curtains, and even ventured to look under the bed and behind the furniture. Zdenko was no longer there, and had left no trace of his entrance.

"There is no one here," said she to the canoness, who came trotting along followed by Hans and the chaplain: the baron was already in bed and asleep, and they could not awaken him.

"I begin to fear," said the chaplain, a little dissatisfied at the fright they had given him, "that the signora Porporina may have been the dupe of her own illusions——"

"No, Mr. Chaplain," replied Consuelo quickly, "no one here is less so than I am."

"And in truth no one has more courage and steady friendship," replied the good man; "but in your ardent hope you imagine, signora, that you see indications where unhappily none exist."

"Father," said the canoness, "the Porporina has the courage of a lion united to the wisdom of a sage. If she has seen Zdenko, Zdenko has been here. We must search for him through the whole house; and as, thank God! every outlet is well closed; he cannot escape us."

They roused the domestics and searched everywhere. Not a chest of drawers did they leave unopened, nor a piece of furniture unmoved. They displaced all the forage in the granaries, and Hans had even the simplicity to look into the baron's great boots. But Zdenko was not found there, any more than elsewhere. They began to think that Consuelo must have been dreaming; but she remained more than ever convinced of the necessity of discovering the secret outlet from the chateau, and resolved to employ all her energy in the attempt. She had taken but a few hours' repose when she commenced her examination. The wing of the building containing her apartment (in which was Albert's also) rested against, and was as it were supported by the hill. Albert himself had chosen this picturesque situation, which enabled him to enjoy a fine view towards the south, and to have on the eastern side a pretty little garden, occupying a terrace on a level with the cabinet in which he studied. He had a great taste for flowers, and cultivated some very rare species upon this square of soil which had been brought to the barren summit of the eminence. The terrace was surrounded by a heavy freestone wall about breast-high, built upon the shelving rock, and from this elevated post the eye commanded the precipice on the other side, and a portion of the vast serrated outline of the Boehmerwald. Consuelo, who had not before visited this spot, admired its beautiful situation and picturesque arrangement, and requested the chaplain to explain to her what use was formerly made of the terrace, before the castle had been transformed from a fortress into a baronial residence.

"It was," said he, "an ancient bastion, a sort of fortified platform, whence the garrison could observe the movements of troops in the valley and upon the surrounding mountains. There is no pass through the mountains which cannot be discovered from this spot. Formerly a high wall with loopholes on all sides surrounded the platform, and protected its occupants from the arrows and balls of an enemy."

"And what is this?" asked Consuelo, approaching a cistern which was in the centre of the parterre, and into which there was a descent by means of a narrow, steep, and winding staircase.

"That is a cistern which always furnished an abundant supply of excellent rock-water to the besieged—a resource of incalculable value to a stronghold."

"Then this water is good to drink?" said Consuelo, examining the greenish and moss-covered water of the cistern. "It seems to me quite muddy."

"It is no longer good, or at least it is not always so, and Count Albert only uses it to water his flowers. I must tell you that for two years an extraordinary phenomenon has occurred in this cistern. The spring—for it is one, the source of which is more or less distant in the heart of the mountain—has become intermittent. For whole weeks the level is extraordinarily low, and when that is the case Count Albert has water drawn by Zdenko from the well in the great court, to refresh his cherished plants. Then, all of a sudden, in the course of a single night and sometimes even in an hour, the cistern is filled with a lukewarm water, muddy as you now see it. Sometimes it empties rapidly; at others the water remains a long time, and is purified by degrees, until it becomes cold and limpid as rock-crystal. A phenomenon of this kind must have taken place last night, for even yesterday I saw the cistern clear and quite full, and now it looks muddy as if it had been emptied and filled anew."

"Then those phenomena do not occur at regular intervals?"

"By no means, and I should have examined them with care, if Count Albert, who prohibits all entrance to his apartments and garden, with that gloomy reserve which characterizes all his actions, had not forbidden me the amusement. I have thought, and still think, that the bottom of the cistern is choked up by mosses and wall plants, which at times close the entrance of the subterranean waters, and afterwards yield to the force of the spring."

"But how do you explain the sudden disappearance of the water at other times?"

"By the great quantity which the count uses to water his flowers."

"But it seems to me that it would require great labour to empty this cistern. It cannot be very deep, then?"

"Not deep! It is impossible to find the bottom."

"In that case, your explanation is not satisfactory," said Consuelo, struck by the chaplain's stupidity.

"Well, find a better," returned he, somewhat confused, and a little piqued at his own want of sagacity.

"Certainly I will find a better," thought Consuelo, who felt deeply interested in the capricious changes of the fountain.

"If you ask Count Albert what it signifies," continued the chaplain, desirous to display a little witty incredulity, in order to recover his superiority in the eyes of the clear-sighted stranger, "he will tell you that these are his mother's tears, which dry up and are renewed again in the bosom of the mountain. The famous Zdenko, to whom you attribute so much penetration, would swear to you that there is a siren concealed therein, who sings most exquisitely to those who have ears to hear her. Between them they have baptized this well the *Fountain of Tears*. It is a very poetic explanation, and those who believe in pagan fables may be satisfied with it."

"I shall not be satisfied with it," thought Consuelo; "I will know how these tears are dried."

"As for myself," pursued the chaplain, "I have thought there must be an escape of the water in some corner of the cistern."

"It seems to me," replied Consuelo, "that unless that were so, the cistern, being supplied by a spring, would constantly overflow."

"Doubtless, doubtless," said the chaplain, not wishing to appear as if he had thought of that for the first time; "very little consideration must make that apparent. But there must be some remarkable derangement in the channels of the water, since it no longer preserves the same level it did formerly."

"Are they natural channels, or aqueducts made by the hands of men?" asked the persevering Consuelo: "that is what I should wish to know."

"That is what no one can ascertain," replied the chaplain, "since Count Albert does not wish to have his precious fountain touched, and has absolutely forbidden that it should be cleaned out."

"I was certain of it," said Consuelo, retiring; "and I think you would do well to respect his wishes, for God knows what misfortune would happen to him if any one attempted to thwart his siren!"

"I am beginning to be convinced," said the chaplain, on quitting Consuelo, "that this young person's mind is no less deranged than the count's. Can insanity be contagious? Or did Master Porpora send her to us, in order that the country air might restore her brain to a healthy condition? To see the pertinacity with which she made me explain the mystery of the cistern, one would suppose that she was the daughter of some engineer of the Venetian canals, and wished to appear well informed on the matter; but I see by her last words, as well as by the hallucinations she had respecting Zdenko this morning, and the pleasant excursion she led us last night to the Schreckenstein, that it is a phantasy of the same nature. Can it be possible that she expects to find Count Albert at the

bottom of this well? Unfortunate young people! would that you could find there reason and truth!" Thereupon the good chaplain proceeded to repeat his breviary while waiting for the dinner-hour.

"It must be," thought Consuelo on her side, "that idleness and apathy engender a singular weakness of mind, since this holy man, who has read and learned so much, has not the least suspicion of my presentiment respecting that fountain. And yet they call Zdenko imbecile!" So saying, Consuelo went to give the young baroness a music lesson until the time should arrive when she could renew her examination.

CHAPTER XL.

"HAVE you ever been present at the falling of the water, or seen it reascend?" said Consuelo in a low voice to the chaplain, as he sat comfortably digesting his dinner during the evening.

"What! what did you say?" cried he, bounding up in his chair, and rolling his great round eyes.

"I was speaking to you of the cistern," returned she, without being disconcerted; "have you ever yourself observed the occurrence of the phenomenon?"

"Ah! yes—the cistern—I remember," replied he with a smile of pity. "There!" thought he, "her crazy fit has attacked her again."

"But you have not answered my question, my dear chaplain," said Consuelo, who pursued her object with that kind of eagerness which characterised all her thoughts and actions, and which was not prompted in the least by any malicious feeling towards the worthy man.

"I must confess, mademoiselle," replied he, coldly, "that I was never fortunate enough to observe that to which you refer, and I assure you I never lost my sleep on that account."

"Oh! I am very certain of that," replied the impatient Consuelo.

The chaplain shrugged his shoulders, and with a great effort rose from his chair in order to escape from so very ardent an inquirer.

"Well! since no one here is willing to lose an hour's sleep for so important a discovery, I will devote my whole night to it if necessary," thought Consuelo; and while waiting for the hour of retiring, she wrapped herself in her mantle and proceeded to take a turn in the garden.

The night was cold and bright, and the mists of evening dispersed in proportion as the moon, then full, ascended towards the empyrean. The stars twinkled more palely at her approach, and the atmosphere was dry and clear. Consuelo, excited but not overpowered by the mingled effects of fatigue, want of sleep, and the generous but perhaps rather unhealthy sympathy she experienced for Albert, felt a slight sensation of fever which the cool evening air could not dissipate. It seemed

to her as if she touched upon the fulfilment of her enterprise, and a romantic presentiment which she interpreted as a command and encouragement from Providence, kept her mind uneasy and agitated. She seated herself upon a little grassy hillock studded with larches, and began to listen to the feeble and plaintive sound of the streamlet at the bottom of the valley. But it seemed to her as if another voice, still more sweet and plaintive, mingled with the murmurings of the water, and by degrees floated upwards to her ears. She stretched herself upon the turf, in order, being nearer the earth, to hear better those light sounds which the breeze wafted towards her every moment. At last she distinguished Zdenko's voice. He sang in German, and by degrees she could distinguish the following words, tolerably well arranged to a Bohemian air, which was characterised by the same simple and plaintive expression as those she had already heard.

"There is down there, down there, a soul in pain and in labour, which awaits her deliverance.

"Her deliverance, her consolation, so often promised.

"The deliverance seems enchained, the consolation seems pitiless.

"There is down there, down there, a soul in pain and in labour, which is weary of waiting."

When the voice ceased singing, Consuelo rose, looked in every direction for Zdenko, searched the whole park and garden to find him, called him in various places, but was obliged to return to the castle without having seen him.

But an hour afterwards, when the whole household had joined in a long prayer for Count Albert, and when everybody had retired to rest, Consuelo hastened to place herself near the Fountain of Tears, and seating herself upon the margin amid the thick mosses and water plants which grew there naturally, and the irises which Albert had planted, she fixed her eyes upon the motionless water, in which the moon, then arrived at the zenith, was reflected as in a mirror.

After waiting almost an hour, and just as the courageous maiden, overcome by fatigue, felt her eyelids growing heavy, she was aroused by a slight noise at the surface of the water. She opened her eyes, and saw the spectrum of the moon agitated, broken, and at last spread in luminous circles upon the mirror of the fountain. At the same time a dull rushing sound, at first imperceptible but soon impetous, became apparent, and she saw the water gradually sink, whirling about as in a funnel, and in less than a quarter of an hour disappear in the depths of the abyss.

She ventured to descend several steps. The spiral staircase, which appeared to have been built for the purpose of permitting the household to reach at pleasure the varying level of the water, was formed of granite blocks half buried in the rock, or hewn out of it. These slimy and slippery steps afforded no means of support, and were lost in the frightful depth. The

darkness, and the noise of the water which still splashed at the bottom of the immeasurable precipice, joined to the impossibility of treading securely with her delicate feet upon the stringy ooze, arrested Consuelo in her mad attempt: she ascended backwards with great difficulty, and seated herself, terrified and trembling, upon the first step.

In the mean time, the water still seemed to be continually receding into the bosom of the earth. The noise became more and more remote, till at last it ceased entirely, and Consuelo pondered on the propriety of getting a light in order to examine the interior of the cistern as far as possible from above; but she feared to miss the arrival of him whom she expected, and remained patient and motionless for nearly an hour longer. At last she thought she perceived a feeble glimmer at the bottom of the well, and leaning anxiously forward, saw that the wavering light ascended little by little. In a short time she was no longer in doubt; Zdenko was ascending the spiral staircase, aided by an iron chain which was secured to the rocky sides. The noise which he made in raising the chain from time to time and again letting it fall, made Consuelo aware of the existence of this species of balustrade, which ceased at a certain height, and which she could neither see nor suspect. Zdenko carred a lantern which he hung on a hook set apart for this purpose and inserted in the rock about twenty feet below the surface of the soil; then he mounted the rest of the staircase lightly and rapidly, without any chain or apparent means of support. However, Consuelo, who observed everything with the greatest attention, saw that he helped himself along by catching hold of certain projecting points in the rock, of some wall plants more vigorous than the rest, and of some bent nails which stood out from the sides, and with which he seemed perfectly familiar. As soon as he had ascended high enough to see Consuelo, she concealed herself from his view by stooping behind the semicircular stone wall which bordered the well, and which was interrupted only at the entrance of the steps. Zdenko emerged into the light, and began slowly to gather flowers in the garden with great care and as if making a selection, until he had formed a large bouquet. Then he entered Albert's study, and through the glass door Consuelo saw him for a long while moving the books, and searching for one which he appeared at last to have found; for he returned towards the cistern, laughing and talking to himself in a satisfied tone, but in a low and almost inaudible voice, so much did he seem divided between the necessity of muttering to himself, according to his usual custom, and the fear of awakening the family in the castle.

Consuelo had not yet asked herself whether she should address him, and request him to conduct her to Albert; and it must be confessed that, at that moment, confounded by what she saw, discouraged in the midst of her enterprise, joyous at having discovered what she so much longed to know, but at

the same time dismayed at the thoughts of descending into the entrails of the earth and the abyss of water, she did not feel sufficient courage to go forward to the end, but allowed Zdenko to descend as he had mounted, resume his lantern and disappear, singing in a voice which gained confidence as he sank into the depths of his retreat—

"The deliverance is enchained, the consolation is pitiless."

With outstretched neck and palpitating heart, Consuelo had his name ten times upon her lips to recall him. She was about to decide by a heroic effort, when she suddenly reflected that such a surprise might make the unfortunate man stagger upon the difficult and dangerous staircase, and perhaps lose his footing. She refrained therefore, promising herself that she would be more courageous on the next day at the right time.

She waited some time longer to see the water again ascend, and this time the phenomenon took place much more speedily. Hardly fifteen minutes had elapsed from her losing the sound of Zdenko's voice and the light of his lantern, before a dull noise like the distant rumbling of thunder was heard, and the water, rushing with violence, ascended, whirling and dashing against the walls of its prison like a seething caldron. This sudden irruption of water had something so frightful in its appearance, that Consuelo trembled for poor Zdenko, asking herself if, in sporting with such dangers and governing thus the forces of nature, there was no risk of his being overpowered by the violence of the current, and of her seeing him float to the surface of the fountain, drowned and bruised like the slimy plants which were tossed on its waves.

Still the means of accomplishing this must be very simple! it only needed perhaps to lower or raise a flood-gate, perhaps only to place a stone on his arrival and remove it on his return. But might not this man, always so absent and lost in his strange reveries, be mistaken, and remove the stone a little too soon? Could he have come by the subterranean path which gave passage to the water of the spring? "Nevertheless I must pass it with him, or without him," said Consuelo, "and that no later than the coming night; *for there is down there a soul in labour and in pain, which waits for me, and which is weary of waiting.* These words were not sung unintentionally, and it was not without some object that Zdenko, who detests German and pronounces it with difficulty, made use of that language to-day."

At last she retired to rest, but she had terrible dreams all the rest of the night. Her fever was gradually gaining ground. She did not perceive it, so strong did she feel her courage and resolution; but every moment she started out of her sleep, imagining herself still upon the steps of that frightful staircase, and unable to reascend, while the water rose below her with the roar of thunder and the rapidity of lightning. She was so changed the next day that everybody remarked the alteration in her features. The chaplain was unable to refrain from con-

fiding to the canoness, that *this agreeable and obliging person* appeared to him to have her brain somewhat deranged; and the good Wenceslawa, who was not accustomed to see so much courage and devotion, began to fear that the Porporina was a very imaginative young lady, and had a very excitable nervous temperament. She relied too much on her good doors cased in iron, and her faithful keys always jingling in her girdle, to give credence for any length of time to the entrance and escape of Zdenko the night before the last. She therefore spoke to Consuelo in affectionate and compassionate terms, beseeching her not to identify herself with the unhappiness of the family so as to destroy her health, and made an effort to inspire her with hopes of her nephew's speedy return, which she herself in the secret recesses of her heart began to lose.

But she was agitated at once by sentiments of fear and hope, when Consuelo, with a look glowing with satisfaction and a smile of gentle pride, replied, "You have good reason to hope, dear madam, and to wait with confidence. Count Albert is alive and as I hope not very ill; for in his retreat he is still interested in his books and flowers. I am certain of it, and could give you proofs."

"What do you mean to say, my dear child?" cried the canoness, struck by her air of conviction. "What have you learned? what have you discovered? Speak, in the name of Heaven! restore life to a despairing family!"

"Say to Count Christian that his son lives and is not far from this. This is as true as that I love and respect you."

The canoness rose for the purpose of hastening to her brother, who had not yet descended to the saloon; but a look and a sigh from the chaplain arrested her steps.

"Let us not inconsiderately inspire such joyful hopes in my poor Christian's breast," said she, sighing in her turn. "If the fact should contradict your sweet promises, my dear child, we should give a death-blow to his unhappy father."

"Then you doubt my words?" replied the astonished Consuelo.

"God forbid, noble Nina! But you may be under an illusion. Alas, this has happened so often to ourselves! You say that you have proofs, my dear daughter—can you not mention them?"

"I cannot—at least it seems to me I ought not," said Consuelo, somewhat embarrassed. "I have discovered a secret to which Count Albert evidently attaches great importance, and I do not think I can reveal it without his permission."

"Without his permission?" cried the canoness, looking at the chaplain irresolutely. "Can she have seen him?" The chaplain shrugged his shoulders imperceptibly, not comprehending the pain his incredulity inflicted on the poor canoness.

"I have not seen him," returned Consuelo; "but I shall see him soon, and so will you, I hope. But I fear I should retard his return if I thwarted his wishes by my indiscretion."

"May Divine truth dwell in your heart, generous creature, and speak through your lips!" said Wenceslawa, looking at her with anxious and pitying eyes. "Keep your secret if you have one, and restore Albert to us if it be in your power. All that I know is, that if this be realized I will embrace your knees, as at this moment I kiss your poor forehead—which is moist and burning," added she, turning towards the chaplain with an air of great emotion, after having pressed her lips to the fevered forehead of the young girl.

"Even if she be mad," said she to the latter, as soon as they were alone, "she is still an angel of goodness, and she seems more interested in our sufferings than we are ourselves. Ah, father, there seems to be a curse upon this house! Every one who has a lofty and noble heart seems struck here with derangement, and our life is passed in pitying what we are constrained to admire."

"I do not deny the good intentions of this young stranger," replied the chaplain. "But that there is delirium in her actions you cannot doubt, madam. She must have dreamt of Count Albert last night, and imprudently gives us her visions as certainties. Be careful not to agitate the pious and resigned spirit of your venerable brother by such unfounded assertions. Perhaps also it would be more prudent not to encourage too much the rash enterprises of Signora Porporina. They might lead her into dangers of a different nature from those she has been willing to encounter hitherto—"

"I do not comprehend you," said the Canoness Wenceslawa, with great simplicity.

"I feel much embarrassed how to explain myself," returned the worthy man, "still it seems to me that—if a secret understanding, very honourable and very disinterested without doubt, should be established between this young artist and the noble count—"

"Well?" said the canoness, opening her eyes very wide.

"Well, madam! do you not think that sentiments of interest and solicitude, entirely innocent in their origin, might in a little time, with the aid of circumstances and romantic ideas, become dangerous to the repose and dignity of the young musician?"

"I never would have thought of that," said the canoness, struck by this observation. "But do you think, father, that the Porporina could forget her humble and precarious position so far as to become attached to one so much her superior as my nephew Albert of Rudolstadt?"

"The Count Albert of Rudolstadt might himself contribute unintentionally to such a feeling, by the inclination he evinces to treat as prejudices the time-honoured advantages of rank and birth."

"You make me seriously uneasy," said Wenceslawa, whose pride of family constituted her chief and almost only feeling. "Can this unfortunate feeling have already taken root in the

child's heart? Can her agitation and her earnest desire to discover Albert, conceal any motive less pure than her natural generosity of soul and attachment to us?"

"I flatter myself not as yet," replied the chaplain, whose only desire was to play an important part in the affairs of the family by his advice and his counsels, while preserving at the same time the appearance of timid respect and submissive obsequiousness. "Still, my dear daughter, you must have your eyes open to passing events, and not allow your vigilance to slumber in the presence of such dangers. This delicate part it is your duty to perform, and it demands all the prudence and penetration with which heaven has endowed you."

After this conversation the canoness's thoughts were in a state of the utmost confusion, and her anxiety took entirely a new direction. She almost forgot that Albert was as it were lost to her, perhaps dying, perhaps even dead, and thought only of preventing the effects of an affection, which in her secret heart she called *disproportionate;* like the Indian in the fable, who, pursued into a tree by *terror* under the form of a tiger, amuses himself by contending with *annoyance* in the form of a fly buzzing about his head.

All day long she kept her eyes fixed upon the Porporina, watching all her steps and anxiously analyzing every word she uttered. Our heroine, for the courageous Consuelo was one at that moment in all the force of the term, easily perceived this anxiety, but was far from attributing it to any other feeling than the doubt of her fulfilling her promise to restore Albert. She never thought of concealing her agitation, so much was she convinced, by the tranquillity and firmness of her conscience, that she ought to be proud of her project rather than blush for it. The modest confusion which the young count's enthusiastic expression of attachment for her had excited in her mind a few days before, gradually faded away before her serious resolution, free as it was from the least shade of vanity. The bitter sarcasms of Amelia, who had a suspicion of the nature of her enterprise without knowing its details, did not move her in the least. She hardly heard them, and only answered by smiles; leaving to the canoness, whose ears were opened wider every hour, the care of recording them, of commenting upon them, and finding in them a terrible meaning.

CHAPTER XLI.

NEVERTHELESS, seeing that she was watched by Wenceslawa with more vigilance than ever, Consuelo feared that she might be thwarted by a mistaken zeal, and composed herself to a more restrained demeanour; thanks to which precaution she was enabled during the day to escape from the canoness's attention, and with nimble feet to take the direction of the Schreckenstein. She had no other project in view at the moment, than to meet Zdenko, to lead him to an explanation, and

ascertain positively if he was willing to conduct her to Albert. She found him quite close to the castle on the path which led to the Schreckenstein. He seemed on his way to meet her, and addressed her with great volubility in Bohemian. "Alas! I do not comprehend you," said Consuelo, as soon as she could find an opportunity of speaking; "I hardly know German, that harsh language which you hate like slavery, and which to me is as sad as exile. But since we cannot otherwise understand each other, consent to speak it with me; we speak it each as badly as the other. I promise you to learn Bohemian, if you will teach it to me."

At these friendly words Zdenko became serious, and stretching out to Consuelo his dry and callous hand, which she did not hesitate to clasp in hers, "Sweet daughter of God," said he, in German, "I will teach you my language and my songs. Which do you wish me to begin with?"

Consuelo thought it better to yield to his fancies, and employ the vehicle of song in questioning him. "I wish that you would sing to me," said she, "the ballad of Count Albert."

"There are," replied he, "more than two hundred thousand ballads about my brother Albert. I cannot teach them to you, as you would not comprehend them. Every day I make new ones, which do not in the least resemble the old. Ask me for anything else."

"Why should I not comprehend them? I am the consolation. I am called Consuelo for you—do you understand? and for Count Albert who alone knows me here."

"You Consuelo?" said Zdenko, with a mocking laugh. "Oh, you do not know what you say. *The deliverance is enchained*—"

"I know—*The consolation is pitiless.* But it is you who are ignorant, Zdenko. The deliverance has broken its chains, the consolation has freed itself from its shackles."

"False! false! madness, German talk!" returned Zdenko, ceasing his laugh and his gambols; "you do not know how to sing."

"Yes, I do know," said Consuelo; "listen." And she sang the first phrase of his song of the three mountains, which she had fixed in her memory, with the words which Amelia had assisted her to recollect and pronounce. Zdenko heard her with transports of delight, and said with a deep sigh, "I love you dearly, my sister—much, very much! Shall I teach you another song?"

"Yes, that of Count Albert, but first in German; afterwards you shall teach it to me in Bohemian."

"How does it begin?" said Zdenko, looking at her roguishly.

Consuelo began the air of the song she had heard the day before: "*There is down there, down there, a soul in labour and in pain*—"

"O, that was yesterday's; I do not recollect it to-day," said Zdenko, interrupting her.

"Well, tell me to-day's."

"The first words? you must tell me the first words."

"The first words? Here they are—listen: Count Albert is down yonder, down yonder in the grotto of Schreckenstein—"

Hardly had she pronounced these words when Zdenko suddenly changed his countenance and attitude; and his eyes flashed with indignation. He made three steps backward, raised his hands as if to curse Consuelo, and began to talk Bohemian to her with all the energy of anger and menace. Frightened at first, but reassured on seeing that he retired from her, Consuelo wished to recall him, and made a movement as if to follow him. He turned infuriated, and seizing an enormous stone, which he seemed to raise without difficulty in his weak and fleshless arms: "Zdenko has never done harm to any one," cried he in German; "Zdenko would not break the wing of a poor fly, and if a little child wished to kill him, he would allow himself to be killed by a little child. But if you look at me again, if you say another word to me, daughter of evil!—liar!—Austrian! Zdenko will crush you like an earthworm, if he should afterwards be obliged to throw himself into the torrent to cleanse his body and his soul from the human blood which he had shed!"

Consuelo, terrified, took to flight, and at the bottom of the hill met a countryman, who, astonished at seeing her running, pale and as if pursued by some one, asked her if she had met a wolf. Consuelo, wishing to know if Zdenko was subject to fits of furious madness, said that she had met the *innocent*, and that he had frightened her.

"You must not be afraid of the innocent," said the countryman, smiling at what he considered the cowardice of a fine lady. "Zdenko is not wicked; he is always singing or laughing, or reciting stories which nobody understands, and which are very beautiful."

"But sometimes he gets angry, and then he threatens and throws stones?"

"Never, never," replied the countryman; "that never has happened. You need never be afraid of Zdenko. Zdenko is as innocent as an angel."

When she had recovered from her fright, Consuelo felt that the countryman must be right, and that she had provoked by an imprudent word the first and only attack of fury which the innocent Zdenko had ever experienced. She reproached herself bitterly. "I was too hasty," said she to herself; "I have awakened in the peaceful mind of this man, deprived as he is of what is proudly called reason, a suffering to which until this moment he was a stranger, and which may now seize upon him on the slightest occasion. He was formerly only partially deranged, perhaps I have made him a confirmed madman."

But she became still more dejected in thinking of the motives for Zdenko's anger. It was beyond all doubt that she had guessed rightly in naming the Schreckenstein as the place of

Albert's retreat. But with what jealous and anxious care did Albert and Zdenko wish to hide this secret even from her! She, it was plain, was not excepted from this proscription; she had then no influence over Count Albert; and the feeling which prompted him to call her his consolation, the pains he had taken the day before to cause Zdenko to invoke her aid by a symbolic song, his confiding to his crazy follower the name of Consuelo—was all this solely the fantasy of the moment, and did no true and constant aspiration point out to him one person more than another as his liberator and his consolation? Even the name of Consolation, uttered, and as it were divined, by him, was a matter of pure chance. She had not concealed from any one that she was of Spanish birth, and that her mother tongue was still more familiar to her than the Italian; and Albert, excited to a pitch of enthusiasm by her song, and knowing of no expression more energetic than that which embodied the idea for which his soul thirsted, and with which his imagination was filled, had addressed her in a language which he knew perfectly, and which no one about him except herself could understand.

Consuelo had never been much deceived in this respect. Still, so fanciful and so ingenious a coincidence had seemed to her something providential, and her imagination had seized upon it without much examination.

But now everything was once more doubtful. Had Albert, in some new phase of his mania, forgotten the feeling he had experienced for her? Was she henceforth useless for his relief, powerless for his welfare? or was Zdenko, who had appeared so intelligent and earnest in seconding Albert's designs, more hopelessly deranged than Consuelo had been willing to suppose? Did he merely execute the orders of his friend, or did he completely forget them, when he furiously forbade to the young girl all approach to the Schreckenstein, and all insight into the truth?

"Well," whispered Amelia, on her return, "did you see Albert this evening floating in the sunset clouds? or will you make him come down the chimney to-night by some potent spell?"

"Perhaps so," replied Consuelo, a little provoked. It was the first time in her life that she felt her pride wounded. She had entered upon her enterprise with so pure and disinterested a feeling, so earnest and high-minded a purpose, that she suffered deeply at the idea of being bantered and despised for want of success.

She was dejected and melancholy all the evening; and the canoness, who remarked the change, did not fail to attribute it to her fear of having disclosed the fatal attachment which had been born in her heart.

The canoness was strangely deceived. If Consuelo had nourished the first seeds of a new passion, she would have been an entire stranger to the fervent faith and holy confidence

which had hitherto guided and sustained her. But so far from this, she had perhaps never experienced the poignant return of her former passion more strongly, than under these circumstances, when she strove to withdraw herself from it by deeds of heroism and a sort of exalted humanity.

On entering her apartment in the evening, she found on her spinet an old book, gilt and ornamented, which she immediately thought she recognised as that which she had seen Zdenko carry away from Albert's study the night before. She opened it at the page where the tassel was placed; it was at that penitential psalm which commences: *De profundis clamavi ad te.* And these Latin words were underlined with ink which appeared to have been recently written, for it stuck a little to the opposite page. She turned over the leaves of the whole volume, which was a famous ancient Bible, called Kralic's, printed in 1579, but found no other indication, no marginal note, no letter. But this simple cry, rising as it were from the depths of the earth, was it not sufficiently significant, sufficiently eloquent? What a contradiction there was then between the expressed and constant desire of Albert, and the recent conduct of Zdenko.

Consuelo was convinced of the truth of her last supposition. Albert, weak and helpless at the bottom of the subterranean cavern which she supposed to be under the Schreckenstein, was perhaps detained there by Zdenko's senseless tenderness. He was perhaps the victim of that idiot who watched over and cherished him after his own fashion, kept him a close prisoner, although yielding sometimes of his own desire to see the light of day while he executed Albert's messages to Consuelo, but opposing himself entirely to the success of her attempts from fear or inexplicable caprice. "Well," said she, "I will go, even if I should have to encounter real dangers; I will go, though I should seem ridiculously imprudent in the eyes of stupid and selfish persons; I will go, though I should be humiliated by the indifference of him who summons me. Humiliated! and how can I be so, if he be himself really as crazy as poor Zdenko? I can have no feeling but one of pity towards either of them. I shall have done my duty. I shall have obeyed the voice of God which inspires me, and His hand which impels me forward with irresistible force."

The feverish excitement in which she had been during the whole of the preceding days, and which, since her last unfortunate meeting with Zdenko, had given place to a painful langour, once more manifested itself both in her mind and body. She felt all her strength restored, and hiding from Amelia the book, her enthusiasm, and her design, she exchanged some cheerful words with her, waited till she had gone to sleep, and then hastened to the Fountain of Tears, furnished with a little dark lantern which she had procured that same morning.

She waited a long while, and was several times obliged to enter Albert's study in order to revive her chilled limbs by a

warmer air. While there, she cast a glance upon the enormous mass of books, not arranged in rows as in a library, but thrown pell-mell upon the floor in the middle of the chamber, as if with a sort of contempt and disgust. She ventured to open some of them. They were almost all written in Latin, and Consuelo could only presume that they were works of religious controversy, emanating from the Romish Church or approved by it. She was endeavouring to comprehend their titles, when she at last heard the bubbling of the water. She closed her lantern, hastened to hide herself behind the balustrade, and awaited Zdenko's arrival. This time he did not stop either in the garden or the study, but passed through both, and crossing Albert's apartment, proceeded, as Consuelo learned afterwards, to listen at the door of the oratory, and of Count Christian's chamber, in order to see whether the old man was praying in distress or sleeping tranquilly. This was a step which his own anxiety often prompted him to take without Albert's suggestion, as will be seen by what follows.

Consuelo did not hesitate as to the part she had to take; her plan was already arranged. She no longer trusted to the reason or the good will of Zdenko; she wished to reach, alone and without guard, him whom she supposed a prisoner. Most probably there was but one path which led under ground from the cistern of the chateau to that of the Schreckenstein. If this path was difficult or dangerous, at least it was practicable, since Zdenko passed through it every night. It certainly must be so with a light; and Consuelo was provided with tapers, with steel, tinder, and flint, to strike fire in case of accident. What inspired her with the greatest confidence of arriving at the Schreckenstein by this subterranean route, was an ancient story she had heard the canoness relate, of a siege formerly sustained by the Teutonic Order. "Those knights," said Wenceslawa, "had in their very refectory a cistern which supplied them with water from the neighbouring mountain, and when their spies wished to make a sortie to observe the enemy, they dried the cistern, traversed its subterranean passages, and came out at a village at some distance which was subject to them." Consuelo remembered that according to the tradition of the country, the village which had covered the hill, called Schreckenstein since its destruction by fire, had been subject to the Fortress of the Giants, and had had secret communication with it in the time of siege. She was strengthened therefore both by reason and by tradition, in seeking this communication and outlet.

She profited by the absence of Zdenko to descend into the well. Before doing so however she fell upon her knees, commended herself to God, and, with simple and unaffected piety, made a sign of the cross, as she had done in the wing of the theatre of San Samuel before appearing upon the stage for the first time. Then she courageously descended the steep and winding stairs, searching in the wall for the points of support which she had seen Zdenko make use of, and not looking be-

neath her for fear of dizziness. She reached the iron chain without accident, and as soon as she had seized hold of it, felt more assured, and had sufficient coolness to look down towards the bottom of the well. There was still some water, and this discovery caused her a moment's agitation. But a little reflection reassured her immediately. The well might be very deep, but the opening in the subterranean passage by which Zdenko came, must be placed at a certain distance below the surface of the soil. She had already descended fifty steps, with that address and agility which young ladies educated in drawing-rooms can never attain, but which the children of the people acquire in their sports and pastimes, and gives them a confidence and courage which they ever afterwards retain. The only real danger was that of slipping on the wet steps; but Consuelo had found in a corner an old slouched hat with large brims, which Baron Frederick had long worn in the chase, and this she had cut up and fastened to her shoes after the manner of buskins. She had remarked a similar contrivance on the feet of Zdenko in his last nocturnal expedition. With these felt soles Zdenko walked through the corridors of the château without making any noise, and it was on this account he had seemed to her rather to glide like a ghost than to walk like a human being. It was also the custom of the Hussites thus to shoe their spies and even their horses, when they attempted a surprise upon the enemy.

At the fifty-second step, Consuelo found a sort of platform and a low arched passage-way leading from it. She did not hesitate to enter, and to advance in a low, narrow, and subterranean gallery, still dripping with the water which had just left it, and hewed out and arched by the hand of man with great solidity. She walked forward, without meeting any obstacle or feeling any emotion of fear for about five minutes, when she imagined she heard a slight noise behind her.

It was perhaps Zdenko, who had descended, and was taking the road to the Schreckenstein. But she was in advance of him, and she quickened her pace in order not to be overtaken by so dangerous a travelling companion. He had no reason to suppose she was before him, and of course could not be in pursuit of her; and while he amused himself with singing and muttering his interminable stories, she would have time to reach Albert and put herself under his protection.

But the noise which she heard, increased, and seemed like that of water which roars and strives and rushes forward. What could have happened? Had Zdenko perceived her design? Had he raised the sluice-gate to intercept her and swallow her up? But he could not do this before passing it himself, and he was behind her. This reflection was not very comforting. Zdenko was capable of devoting himself to death and drowning with her, rather than betray Albert's retreat. Still Consuelo saw no gate, no sluice-way, no stone in her path, which could have retained the water and afterwards given it

vent. In this case the water could only be before her, and the noise came from behind. It still increased, it mounted, it approached with a roar like thunder.

Suddenly Consuelo, struck by a horrible idea, perceived that the gallery, instead of rising, descended, at first with a gentle inclination, and afterwards more and more rapidly. The unfortunate girl had mistaken the way. In her hurry, and confused by the thick vapour which arose from the bottom of the cistern, she had not seen a second arch, much larger, and directly opposite that which she had taken. She had entered the canal which served to carry away the surplus water of the well, instead of that which ascended to the reservoir or spring. Zdenko, returning by the opposite path, had quietly raised the gate; the water had fallen in a cascade to the bottom of the cistern, which was already filled to the height of the waste passage, and was now rushing into the gallery in which Consuelo fled, almost expiring with terror. In a short period the gallery—which was so proportioned that the cistern lost less water by this outlet than it received by the corresponding one on the opposite side, and could thus be filled—would in its turn be overflowed. In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, the gallery would be inundated, and the inclination was still downward towards the abyss whither the water tended to precipitate itself. The vault, dripping from the roof, announced clearly that the water filled it entirely, that there was no possible means of safety, and that all the speed she could employ, would not save the unhappy victim from the impetuosity of the torrent. The air was already pent up by the great mass of water which hurried onwards with a deafening noise; a suffocating heat impeded her respiration, and produced a sort of deadening effect on all her faculties. Already the roaring of the unchained flood sounded in her very ear—already a red foam, threatening precursor of the coming wave—flowed over the path, and outstripped the uncertain and feeble steps of the terrified victim.

CHAPTER XLII.

"O MY mother!" she cried, "open thine arms to receive me! O Anzoleto, I love thee! O my God, receive my soul into a better world!"

Hardly had she uttered this cry of agony to Heaven, when she tripped and stumbled over some object in her path. O surprise! O divine goodness! It is a steep and narrow staircase, opening from one of the walls of the gallery, and up which she rushes on the wings of fear and of hope! The vault rises before her—the torrent dashes forward—strikes the staircase which Consuelo has had just time to clear—engulfs the first ten steps—wets to the ancle the agile feet which fly before it, and filling at last to the vaulted roof the gallery which Consuelo has left behind her, is swallowed up in the darkness, and falls with a horrible din into a deep reservoir, which the

heroic girl looks down upon from a little platform she has reached on her knees and in darkness.

Her candle had been extinguished. A violent gust of wind had preceded the irruption of the mass of waters. Consuelo fell prostrate upon the last step, sustained hitherto by the instinct of self-preservation, but ignorant if she was saved—if the din of this cataract was not a new disaster which was about to overtake her—if the cold spray which dashed up even to where she was kneeling, and bathed her hair, was not the chilling hand of death extended to seize her.

In the mean time, the reservoir is filled by degrees to the height of other deeper waste ways, which carry still farther into the bowels of the earth the current of the abundant spring. The noise diminishes, the vapours are dissipated, and a hollow and harmonious murmur echoes through the caverns. With a trembling hand Consuelo succeeds in relighting her candle. Her heart still beats violently against her bosom, but her courage is restored, and throwing herself on her knees, she thanks God. Lastly, she examines the place in which she is, and throws the trembling light of her lantern upon the surrounding objects. A vast cavern hollowed by the hand of nature, is extended like a roof over an abyss into which the distant fountain of the Schreckenstein flows, and loses itself in the recesses of the mountain. This abyss is so deep that the water which dashes into it cannot be seen at the bottom; but when a stone is thrown in, it is heard falling for a space of two minutes with a noise resembling thunder. The echoes of the cavern repeat it for a long time, and the hollow and frightful dash of the water is heard still longer, and might be taken for the howlings of the infernal pack. At one side of this cavern a narrow and dangerous path hollowed out of the rock runs along the margin of the precipice, and is lost in another gallery where the labour of man ceases, and which takes an upward direction and leaves the course of the current.

This is the road which Consuelo must take. There is no other—the water has closed and entirely filled that by which she came. It is impossible to await Zdenko's return in the grotto; its dampness would be fatal, and already the flame of her candle grows pale, flickers, and threatens to expire, without the possibility of being relighted.

Consuelo is not paralyzed by the horror of her situation. She thinks indeed that she is no longer on the road to the Schreckenstein, but that these subterranean galleries which open before her, are a freak of nature, and conduct to places which are impassable, or to some labyrinth whence there is no issue. Still she will venture, were it only to seek a safer asylum until the next night. The next night, Zdenko will return and stop the current, the gallery will be again emptied, and the captive can retrace her steps and once more behold the blue vault of heaven

Consuelo therefore plunged into the mysterious recesses of

the cavern with fresh courage, attentive this time to all the peculiarities of the soil, and always careful to follow the ascending paths, without allowing her course to be diverted by the different galleries, apparently more spacious and more direct, which presented themselves every moment. By this means she was sure of not again meeting any currents of water, and of being able to retrace her steps.

She continued to advance in the midst of a thousand obstacles. Enormous stones blocked up her path; gigantic bats, awakened from their slumbers by the light of the lantern, came striking against it in squadrons, and whirling around the traveller like spirits of darkness. After the first emotions of surprise were over, she felt her courage increase at each fresh danger. Sometimes she climbed over immense blocks of stone which had been detached from the huge vault overhead, where other enormous masses hung from the cracked and disjointed roof, as if every moment about to fall and overwhelm her. At other times the vault became so low and narrow that Consuelo was obliged to creep on her hands and knees amid a close and heated atmosphere, in order to force a passage. She proceeded thus for half an hour, when on turning a sharp angle which her light and agile form could hardly pass, she fell from Charybdis into Scylla, on finding herself face to face with Zdenko--Zdenko, at first petrified by surprise and frozen by terror, but soon indignant, furious, and menacing, as she had previously seen him.

In this labyrinth, surrounded by such numberless obstacles, and aided only by a light which the want of air threatened to stifle every moment, Consuelo felt that flight was impossible. For a moment she had the idea of defending herself hand to hand against his murderous attempts; for Zdenko's wandering eyes and foaming mouth sufficiently announced that this time he would not confine himself to threats. Suddenly he took a strange and ferocious resolution, and began to gather huge stones and build them one upon the other between himself and Consuelo, in order to wall up the narrow gallery in which she was. In this way he was certain, by not emptying the cistern for several days, to cause her to perish with hunger, like the bee which encloses the incautious hornet in his cell by stopping up the mouth with wax.

But it was not with wax, but with granite, that Zdenko built, and he carried on his work with astonishing rapidity. The amazing strength which this man, although emaciated and apparently so weak, displayed in collecting and arranging the blocks, proved to Consuelo that all resistance would be vain, and that it was better to trust to finding another exit by retracing her steps, than to drive him to extremity by irritating him. She used her utmost powers of entreaty and persuasion to endeavour to move him. "Zdenko," said she, "what are you doing there, foolish one? Albert will reproach you with my death. Albert expects and calls me. I am his friend, his

consolation, his safety. In destroying me, you destroy your friend and your brother."

But Zdenko, fearing to be persuaded, and resolved to continue his work, commenced to sing in his own language a lively and animated air, still continuing to build his cyclopean wall with an active and powerful hand.

One stone only was wanting to complete the edifice. Consuelo with a feeling of terror, saw him fix it in its place. "Never," thought she, "shall I be able to demolish this wall; I should require the hands of a giant." The wall was now finished, and immediately she saw Zdenko commence building another, behind the first. It was a quarry, a whole fortress, which he meant to heap up between her and Albert. He continued to sing, and seemed to take extreme pleasure in his work.

A fortunate idea at last occurred to Consuelo. She remembered the famous heretical formula she had requested Amelia to explain to her, and which had so shocked the chaplain. "Zdenko!" cried she in Bohemian, through one of the openings of the badly joined wall which already separated them; "friend Zdenko, *may he who has been wronged salute thee!*"

Hardly had she pronounced these words, when they operated upon Zdenko like a charm: he let fall the enormous block which he held, uttered a deep sigh, and began to demolish his wall with even more promptitude than he had displayed in building it. Then reaching his hand to Consuelo, he assisted her in silence to surmount the scattered fragments, after which he looked at her with attention, sighed deeply, and giving her three keys tied together with a red ribbon, pointed out the path before her, and repeated, "May he who has been wronged salute thee!"

"Will you not serve me as a guide?" said she. "Conduct me to your master." Zdenko shook his head. "I have no master," said he; "I had a friend, but you deprive me of him. Our destiny is accomplished. Go whither God directs you; as for me, I shall weep here till you return."

And seating himself upon the ruins, he buried his head in his hands, and would not utter another word. Consuelo did not stop long to console him. She feared the return of his fury, and profiting by this momentary respect, and certain at last of being on the route to the Schreckenstein, she hurried forward on her way. In her uncertain and perilous journey, Consuelo had not made much advance; for Zdenko, who had taken a much longer route, but one which was inaccessible to the water, had met her at the point of junction of the two subterranean passages, which made the circuit of the chateau, its vast outbuildings, and the hill on which it stood—one, by a well arranged winding path, excavated in the rock by the hand of man—the other frightful, wild, and full of dangers. Consuelo did not in the least imagine that she was at that moment under the park, and yet she passed its gates and

moat by a path which all the keys and all the precautions of the canoness could no longer close against her.

After having proceeded some distance on this new route, she almost resolved to turn back and renounce an enterprise which had already proved so difficult and almost fatal to her. Perhaps fresh obstacles awaited her. Zdenko's ill will might be excited afresh. And if he should pursue and overtake her? If he should raise a second wall to prevent her return? Whereas, on the other hand, by abandoning her project, and asking him to clear the way to the cistern and empty it again that she might ascend, she had every chance of finding him gentle and benevolent. But she was still too much under the influence of her recent emotion, to think of once more facing that fantastic being. The terror he had caused her increased in proportion to the distance which separated them, and after having escaped his vengeance by almost miraculous presence of mind, she felt herself utterly overcome on thinking of it. She therefore continued her flight, having no longer the courage to attempt what might be necessary to render him favourable, and only wishing to find one of those magic doors, the keys of which he had given her, in order to place a barrier between herself and the possible return of his fury.

But might she not find Albert—that other madman whom she rashly persisted in thinking kind and tractable—actuated by feelings toward her, similar to those which Zdenko had just manifested? There was a thick veil of doubt and uncertainty over all this adventure; and stripped of the romantic attraction which had served as an inducement for her to undertake it, Consuelo asked herself if she was not the most crazy of the three, to have precipitated herself into this abyss of dangers and mysteries, without being sure of arriving at a favourable result.

Nevertheless she followed the gallery, which was spacious, and admirably excavated by the athletic heroes of the middle ages. All the rocks were cut through by an elliptic arch of much character and regularity. The less compact portions, the chalky veins of the soil, and all those places where there was any danger of the roof falling in, were supported by finely worked arches of freestone, bound together by square keystones of granite. Consuelo did not stop to admire this immense work, executed with a solidity which promised to defy the lapse of many ages; neither did she ask herself how the present owners of the château could be ignorant of the existence of so important a construction.

She might have explained it by remembering, that all the historical documents of the family and estate had been destroyed more than a century before, at the epoch of the Reformation in Bohemia; but she no longer looked around her, and hardly bestowed a thought upon anything except her own safety, satisfied with simply finding a level floor, an air which she could breathe, and a free space in which to move. She

had still a long distance to traverse, although this direct route to the Schreckenstein was much shorter than the winding path through the mountain. She found the way very tedious, and no longer able to determine in what direction she was proceeding, she knew not if it led to the Schreckenstein, or to some more distant termination.

After walking for about a quarter of an hour, she found the vault gradually increase in height, and the work of the architect cease entirely. Nevertheless these vast quarries, and these majestic grottoes through which she passed, were still the work of man; but trenched upon by vegetation, and receiving the external air through numberless fissures, they had a less gloomy aspect than the galleries, and contained a thousand hiding-places and means of escape from the pursuit of an irritated adversary. But a noise of running water which was now heard made Consuelo shudder; and if she had been able to jest in such a situation, she might have confessed to herself that Baron Frederick on his return from the chase had never expressed a greater horror of water than she experienced at that instant.

But reflection soon reassured her. Ever since she had left the precipice where she had been so nearly overwhelmed with the rush of water, she had continued to ascend, and unless Zdenko had at his command a hydraulic machine of inconceivable power and extent, he could not raise to that height his terrible auxiliary, the torrent. Besides, it was evident that she must somewhere encounter the current of the fountain, the sluice, or the spring itself; and if she had reflected farther, she would have been astonished that she had not yet found in her path this mysterious source, this Fountain of Tears which supplied the cistern. The fact was, that the spring pursued its way through unknown regions of the mountain, and that the gallery, cutting it at right angles, did not encounter it except just near the cistern, and afterwards under the Schreckenstein, as happened to Consuelo. The sluice-gate was far behind her, on the path which Zdenko had passed alone, and Consuelo approached the spring, which for ages had been seen by no one except Albert and Zdenko. In a short time she met with the current, and this time she walked along its bank without fear and without danger.

A path of smooth fresh sand bordered the course of the limpid and transparent stream, which ran with a pleasant murmur between carefully formed banks. There the handiwork of man once more reappeared. The path sloped down to the margin of the rivulet, and wound its way through beautiful aquatic plants, enormous wall-flowers, and wild brambles, which flourished in this sheltered place without injury from the rigour of the season. Enough of the external air penetrated through cracks and crevices to support the vegetation, but these crevices were too narrow to afford passage to the curious eye which sought to pry into them from without. It was like a na-

tural hot-house, preserved by its vaults from cold and snow, but sufficiently aired by a thousand imperceptible breathing-holes. It seemed as if some careful and discriminating hand had protected the lives of those beautiful plants, and freed the sand, which the torrent threw upon its banks of any stones, that could have hurt the feet; and this supposition would have been correct. It was Zdenko who had made the neighbourhood of Albert's retreat so lovely, pleasant, and secure.

Consuelo already began to feel the grateful influence which the less gloomy and poetic aspect of external objects produced upon her imagination. When she saw the pale rays of the moon glance here and there through the openings of the rocks, and reflect themselves upon the moving water; when she saw the motionless plants, which the water did not reach, agitated at intervals by the wind of the forest; when she perceived herself ascending nearer and nearer to the surface of the earth, she felt her strength renovated, and the reception which awaited her at the end of her heroic pilgrimage was depicted to her mind in less sombre colours. At last she saw the path turn abruptly from the margin of the stream, enter a short gallery newly built, and terminate at a little door, which seemed of metal, it was so cold, and which was encircled, and as it were framed, by an enormous ground-ivy.

When she saw herself at the end of all her fatigues and uncertainty—when she rested her weary hand upon this last obstacle, which would yield to her touch in a moment (for she held the key of the door in her other hand)—Consuelo hesitated, and felt a timidity take possession of her, which was more difficult to conquer than all her terrors. She was about to penetrate alone into a place closed to every eye, to every human thought, and there to surprise, in sleep or reverie, a man whom she hardly knew; who was neither her father, nor her brother, nor her husband; who perhaps loved her, but whom she neither could love nor wished to love. "God has conducted me here," thought she, "through the most frightful dangers. It is by his will and by his protection that I have reached this spot. I come with a fervent mind, a resolution full of charity, a tranquil heart, a disinterestedness proof against every assault. Perhaps death awaits me, and yet the thought does not terrify me. My life is desolate, and I could lose it without much regret; I felt this an instant since, and for the last hour I have seen myself doomed to a frightful death, with a tranquillity for which I was not prepared. This is, perhaps, a favour which God sends to me in my last moments. Perhaps I am about to perish under the blows of a madman, and I advance to meet this catastrophe with the firmness of a martyr. I believe with ardent faith in an eternal life, and feel that if I perish here, victim to a friendship, perhaps useless, but at least conscientious, I shall be recompensed in a happier life. What delays me? and why do I experience an inexplicable dread, as if I were about to commit a fault, and to have to blush before him I

have come to save?" Thus did Consuelo, too modest to understand her modesty, struggle with her feelings, and almost reproach herself for the delicacy of her scruples. Nevertheless she put the key into the lock of the door; but she tried to turn it ten times before she could resolve to do so. A sensation of overpowering lassitude took possession of her frame, and threatened to incapacitate her from proceeding with her enterprise, at the very moment when success seemed to crown her efforts.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOWEVER, she made up her mind. She had three keys, and she therefore must pass through three doors and two apartments, before reaching that in which she supposed Albert to be a prisoner. She would thus have sufficient time to stop, if her strength failed her.

She entered a vaulted hall, which had no other furniture than a bed of dried fern on which was thrown a sheep-skin as coverlet. A pair of ancient-looking sandals, very much worn, served as an indication by which she recognised it as Zdenko's chamber. She recognised also the little basket which she had carried filled with fruit to the Stone of Terror, and which after two days had disappeared. She resolved upon opening the second door, after having carefully closed the first, for she still thought with terror of the possible return of the wayward owner of this dwelling. The second apartment which she entered was vaulted like the first, but the walls were protected by mats and trellises covered with moss. A stove diffused a pleasant heat through it, and it was doubtless its funnel opening in the rock, which produced the fleeting light seen by Consuelo on the summit of the Schreckenstein. Albert's bed, like Zdenko's, was formed of a heap of leaves and dried herbs; but Zdenko had covered it with magnificent bear-skins, in spite of the absolute equality which Albert exacted in all their habits, and which Zdenko observed in everything that did not interfere with the passionate tenderness he felt for him, and with the care which he bestowed upon him in preference to himself. Consuelo on entering this chamber was received by Cynabre, who hearing the key turn in the lock, had posted himself upon the threshold, with raised ear and anxious eye. But Cynabre had received a peculiar education from his master: he was a friend, and not a guardian. When young, he had been so strictly forbidden to howl and to bark, that he had entirely lost the habit so natural to all animals of his species. If any one had approached Albert with evil intentions, he would have found his voice; if any one had attacked him, he would have defended him. But prudent and circumspect as a hermit, he never made the slightest noise without being sure of what he was about, and without having carefully examined and smelt those who approached him. He walked up therefore to Con-

suelo with a look that had something almost human in it; smelt her dress, and especially her hand, which had held for a long time the keys touched by Zdenko; and completely reassured by this circumstance, he abandoned himself to the grateful recollection he had retained of her, and placed his great velvet paws upon her shoulders with silent joy, while he slowly swept the earth with his long and feathery tail. After this grave but sincere welcome, he returned to his bed on the corner of the skin which covered his master's couch, and stretched himself upon it with the apparent weariness of old age, although he still followed with his eyes Consuelo's every step and movement.

Before venturing to approach the third door, Consuelo cast a glance around this hermitage, in order to gather from it some indication of the moral condition of him who occupied it. She found no trace of madness or despair. An extreme neatness and order prevailed throughout. A cloak and other garments were hanging from the horns of the urus, a curiosity which Albert had brought from the forests of Lithuania, and which served for clothes-pegs. His numerous books were regularly arranged in a book-case of rough boards, supported by great branches admirably fashioned by a rude but ingenious hand. The table and the two chairs were of the same workmanship. A hortus siccus and some old books of music, entirely unknown to Consuelo, with titles and words in the Sclavonic language, served to reveal more completely the peaceful, simple, and studious habits of the anchorite. An iron lamp, curious from its antiquity, was suspended from the middle of the vault, and burned in the eternal night of this melancholy sanctuary.

Consuelo remarked that there were no fire-arms in the place. Notwithstanding the taste of the wealthy inhabitants of those forests for the chase and for the objects of luxury which accompany its enjoyment, Albert had no gun, not even a hunting-knife, and his old dog had never learned the *grande science:* for which reason Cynabre was an object of Baron Frederick's contempt and pity. Albert had a horror of blood; and though he appeared to enjoy life less than any one, he had a religious and boundless respect for the idea of life in general. He could neither himself kill, nor see killed, even the lowest animals of creation. He would have delighted in all the natural sciences, but he contented himself with mineralogy and botany. Even entomology seemed to him too cruel a science, and he never could have sacrificed the life of an insect to gratify his curiosity. Consuelo knew these particulars, and she now remembered them on seeing the evidences of Albert's peaceful occupations. "No, I will not be afraid," said she to herself, "of so gentle and peaceful a being. This is the cell of a saint and not the dungeon of a madman." But the more she was reassured as to the nature of his mental malady, the more did she feel troubled and confused. She almost regretted that she

was not to find a deranged or dying man; and the certainty of presenting herself before a real man made her hesitate more and more.

Not knowing how to announce herself, she sunk into a reverie which had lasted some minutes when the sound of an admirable instrument struck her ear: it was a violin of Stradivarius, giving birth to a solemn and sublime strain, under a chaste and skilful hand. Never had Consuelo heard so perfect a violin, so touching and at the same time so simple a performance. The air was unknown to her; but from its strange and simple forms, she judged it to be more ancient than any ancient music she was acquainted with. She listened with rapture, and now comprehended how Albert could have so well appreciated her from the first phrase he heard her sing. It was because he had the revelation of the true, the grand music. He might not be acquainted possibly with all the wonderful resources of the art; but he had within him the divine *afflatus*, the intelligence, and the love of the beautiful. When he had finished, Consuelo, entirely reassured, and animated by a more lively sympathy, was about to venture to knock at the door which still separated her from him, when it opened slowly, and she saw the young count advance, his head bowed down, his eyes fixed upon the earth, and his violin and bow hanging loosely in his nerveless hands. His paleness was frightful, and his hair and dress in a disorder which Consuelo had not before witnessed. His absent air, his broken and dejected attitude, and the despairing apathy of his movements, announced, if not entire alienation, at least the disorder and abandonment, of human reason. He seemed one of those mute and oblivious spectres, in which the Sclavonian people believe, who enter mechanically into the houses at night, and are seen to act without connexion and without aim, obeying as if by instinct the former habits of their lives, without recognising and without seeing their friends and terrified servants, who fly from or look at them in silence, frozen with astonishment and fear. Such was Consuelo on meeting Count Albert, and perceiving that he did not see her, although he was not two paces distant. Cynabre had risen and licked his master's hand. Albert said some friendly words to him in Bohemian; then following with his eyes the movements of the dog, who carried his discreet caresses to Consuelo, he gazed attentively at the feet of the young girl, which were shod at this moment much like those of Zdenko, and without raising his head, spoke in Bohemian some words which she did not understand, but which seemed a question, and ended with her name. On seeing him in this state, Consuelo felt her timidity disappear. Yielding entirely to her compassion, she saw only the unfortunate man with his bleeding heart, who still invoked without recognising her, and placing her hand upon the young man's arm confidently and firmly, she said to him in Spanish, with her pure and penetrating voice, "Consuelo is here!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

HARDLY had Consuelo uttered her name, when Count Albert, raising his eyes and looking in her face, immediately changed his attitude and expression. He let his violin fall to the ground with as much indifference as if he had never known its use, and clasping his hands with an air of profound tenderness and respectful sadness, "It is thou then whom I see at last in this place of exile and suffering, O my poor Wanda?" cried he, uttering a sigh which seemed to rend his breast. "Dear—dear—and unhappy sister! Unfortunate victim, whom I avenged too late, and whom I knew not how to defend! Ah! thou knowest that the villain who outraged thee, perished in torments, and that my pitiless hand was bathed in the blood of his accomplices. I opened the deep veins of the accursed church. I washed thy dishonour and my own and that of my people, in rivers of blood. What more dost thou desire, O restless and revengeful spirit? The times of zeal and anger have passed away; we live now in the days of repentance and of expiation. Ask from me tears and prayers—ask no more for blood. I have henceforth a horror of blood, and will shed no more. No, no, not a single drop! John Ziska will henceforth fill his chalice only with inexhaustible tears and bitter sobs!"

While speaking thus with wandering eyes and features animated by a sudden phrenzy, Albert moved around Consuelo, and recoiled with a kind of horror each time she made a movement to interrupt this strange adjuration. Consuelo did not require much reflection to understand the turn which her host's insanity had taken. She had heard the history of John Ziska related often enough, to know that a sister of that formidable fanatic, who had been a nun before the breaking out of the war of the Hussites, had died of sorrow and shame in her convent, from a forced breach of her vows; and that the life of Ziska had been one long and solemn vengeance of that crime. At that moment, Albert, recalled by some association of ideas to his ruling fancy, believed himself John Ziska, and addressed her as the shade of Wanda, his unfortunate sister.

She resolved not to contradict his illusion too abruptly.

"Albert," said she,—"for your name is no longer John, as mine is no longer Wanda—look at me well, and see that I, as well as you, am changed in features and character. What you have just said, I came to recall to your mind. Human justice is more than satisfied, and it is the day of divine justice which I now announce to you. God commands us to forgive and to forget. These fatal recollections, this pertinacity of yours in exercising a faculty which he has not given to other men, this scrupulous and gloomy remembrance which you retain of your anterior existences, God is offended at, and with-

draws from you, because you have abused them. Do you hear me, Albert, and do you understand me now?"

"O my mother!" replied Albert, pale and trembling, falling on his knees and looking at Consuelo with an extraordinary expression of terror, "I do hear thee, and understand thy words. I see that thou transformest thyself, to convince and subdue me. No, thou art no longer Wanda of Ziska, the violated virgin, the weeping nun. Thou art Wanda of Prachalitz, whom men call Countess of Rudolstadt, and who bore in thy bosom the wretched being they now call Albert."

"It is not by the caprice of men that you are so called," returned Consuelo with firmness; "for it is God who has caused you to live again under other conditions and with new duties. Those duties, Albert, you either do not know or you despise them. You travel back the course of ages with an impious pride; you aspire to penetrate the secrets of destiny; you think to equal yourself with God, by embracing in your view the present and the past. It is I who tell you this, and it is truth, it is faith which inspires me; this always looking backwards is rash and criminal. This supernatural memory which you attribute to yourself, is an illusion. You have taken some vague and feeble glimmerings for certainty, and your imagination has deceived you. Your pride has built up an empty and unsubstantial edifice, when you assign to yourself the most important parts in the history of your ancestors. Beware lest you are not what you suppose. Fear lest, to punish you, eternal wisdom should open your eyes for an instant, and cause you to perceive in your former life, less illustrious faults and less glorious objects of remorse, than those on which you dare to pride yourself."

Albert heard this discourse with timid attention, his face hidden in his hands, and his knees buried in the earth.

"Speak! speak, O voice of Heaven! which I hear, but which I no longer recognise," murmured he in stifled accents. "If thou art the angel of the mountain—if thou art, as I believe, the celestial figure which has so often appeared to me upon the Stone of Terror—speak—command my will, my conscience, my imagination. Thou well knowest that I seek for the light with anguish, and that if I lose myself in the darkness, it is from my desire to dissipate it in order to reach thee."

"A little humility, a little confidence and submission to the eternal decrees of wisdom, which are incomprehensible to man—that is the path of truth for you, Albert. Renounce from your heart, and renounce firmly, once for all, any wish to know anything beyond this passing existence which is imposed upon you; and you will again become acceptable to God, useful to man, tranquil in yourself. Humble your proud intellect; and without losing faith in your immortality, without doubting the divine goodness, which pardons the past and watches over the future, apply yourself to render humane and full of good fruits, this present life which you despise, when

you ought to respect it and give yourself to it, with all your strength, your self-denial, and your charity. Now, Albert, look at me, and may your eyes be unsealed. I am no longer your sister nor your mother; I am a friend whom Heaven has sent to you, and whom it has conducted by miraculous means to snatch you from pride and from insanity. Look at me, and tell me, on your soul and on your conscience, who I am and what is my name."

Albert, trembling and confused, raised his head and looked at her again, but with less wildness and terror than before.

"You cause me to leap over abysses," said he to her; "by your deep and searching words you confound my reason, which (for my misfortune) I thought superior to that of other men, and you order me to know and understand the present time and human affairs. I cannot. To lose the remembrance of certain phases of my life, I must pass through a terrible crisis; and to seize the sense of a new phase, I must transform myself by efforts which lead me to the gates of death. If you command me, in the name of a power which I feel superior to mine, to assimilate my thoughts to yours, I must obey; but I know those horrible struggles, and I know that death is their termination. Pity me, you who operate upon me by a sovereign charm; aid me, or I sink. Tell me who you are, for I do not know. I do not remember ever to have seen you before: I do not know your sex, and you are there before me like a mysterious statue, the type of which I vainly strive to find in my memory. Help me! help me! for I feel that I am dying."

While speaking thus, Albert, whose face was at first flushed with a feverish brightness, became again of a frightful paleness. He stretched out his hands towards Consuelo; but immediately lowered them to the ground to support himself, as if he had been overpowered by an irresistible faintness. Consuelo, becoming by degrees initiated into the secrets of his mental malady, felt herself reanimated, and as if inspired by new strength and intelligence. She took his hands, and obliging him to rise, she conducted him towards the chair which was near the table. He let himself fall into it, overpowered by unsufferable fatigue, and bent forward as if about to faint. The struggle of which he spoke was but too real. Albert had the faculty of recovering his reason, and repelling the suggestions of the fever which consumed his brain; but he did not succeed without efforts and sufferings which exhausted his powers. When this reaction was produced of its own accord, he issued from it refreshed, and as it were renewed; but when he induced it by a resolution of his still powerful will, his body sank under the effort, and all his limbs were affected by catalepsy. Consuelo understood what was passing within him. "Albert," said she, placing her cold hand upon his head, "I know you, and that suffices. I am interested in you, and that also must be sufficient for you at present. I

forbid your making any effort of your will to recognise or to speak to me. Only listen; and if my words seem obscure to you, wait till I explain myself, and be in no haste to discover their meaning. I ask of you a passive submission and an entire abandonment of your reflective powers. Can you descend into your heart, and there concentrate all your existence?"

"Oh, how much good you do me!" replied Albert. "Speak to me again—speak to me always thus. You hold my soul in your hands. Whoever you may be, keep it—do not let it escape—for it would go and knock at the gates of eternity, and would there be broken. Tell me who you are—tell me quickly; and if I do not comprehend, explain it to me: for, in spite of myself, I seek to know and am agitated."

"I am Consuelo," replied the young girl; "and you know it, since you instinctively speak to me in a language which I alone, of all those near you, can comprehend. I am the friend whom you have expected for a long while, and whom you recognised one day as she was singing. Since that day you have left your family and hidden yourself here. Since that day I have sought for you; you have appealed to me several times through Zdenko; but Zdenko, who executed your orders in certain respects, was not willing to conduct me to you. I have succeeded, through a thousand dangers——"

"You could not have succeeded had Zdenko been unwilling," interrupted Albert, raising his body, which was weighed down and resting upon the table. "You are a dream, I see it well, and all that I hear is simply passing in my imagination. Oh, my God! you lull me with deceitful joys, and suddenly the disorder and incoherence of my dreams are revealed to me, and I find myself alone—alone in the world with my despair and my madness! O Consuelo! Consuelo! fatal and delicious dream! where is the being that bears your name, and is sometimes clothed with your form? No, you exist only in me, and it is my delirium which has created you."

Albert again let his head fall on his extended arms, which became cold and rigid as marble.

Consuelo saw him approach his lethargic crisis, and felt herself so exhausted and so ready to faint, that she feared she could not avert it. She endeavoured to reanimate Albert's hands in her own, which were hardly more alive. "My God," said she, with a choking voice, her heart sinking within her, "succour two unfortunate beings who can hardly do anything for each other!"

She saw herself alone, shut up with a dying man, dying herself, and expecting no help for herself or for him, except from Zdenko, whose return seemed to her more to be dreaded than desired.

Her prayer seemed to strike Albert with an unexpected emotion. "Some one is praying by my side," said he, trying to raise his overburdened head. "I am not alone. Oh, no! I am not alone," added he, looking at Consuelo's hand clasped

in his. "Succouring hand, mysterious pity, human, fraternal sympathy! You render my agony very gentle, my heart very grateful!" And he imprinted his frozen lips on Consuelo's hand, and remained thus for a long while.

A feeling of modesty restored to Consuelo the sense of life. She did not dare to withdraw her hand from the unfortunate young man; but, divided between her embarrassment and her weariness, and no longer able to remain standing, she was compelled to rest upon Albert, and to place her other hand upon his shoulder.

"I feel myself restored," said Albert, after a few moments. "It seems to me that I am in my mother's arms. O my aunt Wenceslawa, if it be you who are near me, forgive me for having forgotten you—you, and my father, and all my family—whose very names had escaped my memory. I return to you—do not leave me; but restore to me Consuelo—Consuelo, whom I had so long expected, whom I had at last found, and whom I find no more, and without whom I can no longer exist."

Consuelo endeavoured to speak to him; but in proportion as Albert's memory and strength seemed restored to him, Consuelo's life seemed to desert her. So much terror and fatigue, so many emotions and superhuman efforts, had so broken her down, that she could struggle no longer. The words expired upon her lips, she felt her limbs bend under her, and every object swam before her eyes. She fell upon her knees by the side of Albert, and her swooning form struck the breast of the young man.

Immediately Albert, as if awaking from a dream, saw her—recognised her—uttered a deep cry, and arousing himself, pressed her in his arms with wild energy. Through the veil of death which seemed to spread over her eyelids, Consuelo saw his joy, and was not terrified. It was a holy joy, radiant with purity. She closed her eyes and fell into a state of utter prostration, which was not sleep nor waking, but a kind of indifference and insensibility to all present things.

CHAPTER XLV.

When Consuelo recovered the use of her faculties, finding herself seated upon a hard bed, and not yet able to raise her eyelids, she endeavoured to collect her thoughts. But the prostration had been so complete that her powers returned but slowly; and as if the sum of the fatigues and emotions which she had latterly experienced, had surpassed her strength, she tried in vain to remember what had happened to her since she left Venice. Even her departure from that adopted country, where she had passed such happy days, appeared to her like a dream; and it was a solace (alas, too fleeting!) to her to be able to doubt for an instant her exile, and the misfortunes which caused it. She therefore imagined that she was still in

her poor chamber in the Corte Minelli, on her mother's pallet; that after having had a violent and trying scene with Anzoleto, the confused recollection of which floated in her memory, she returned to life and hope on feeling him near her, on hearing his interrupted breathing, and the tender words he addressed to her in a low and murmuring voice. A languishing and delicious joy penetrated her heart at this thought, and she raised herself with some exertion to look at her repentant friend, and to stretch out her hand to him. But she pressed a cold and unknown hand; and in place of the smiling sun, whose rosy brilliancy she was accustomed to see through her white curtain, she saw only a sepulchral light, falling from the roof of a gloomy vault, and swimming in a humid atmosphere; she felt under her arm the rude spoils of savage animals, and amid a horrible silence the pale face of Albert bent towards her like that of a spectre.

Consuelo thought she had descended living to the tomb; she closed her eyes, and fell back upon the bed of dried leaves with a deep groan. It was some minutes before she could remember where she was, and to what gloomy host she was confided. Terror, which the enthusiasm of her devotion had hitherto combated and subdued, seized upon her, so that she feared to open her eyes lest she should see some horrible spectacle—the paraphernalia of death—a sepulchre—open before her. She felt something upon her brow, and raised her hand to it. It was a garland of leaves with which Albert had crowned her. She took it off to look at it, and saw a branch of cypress.

"I believed you dead, O my soul, O my consolation!" said Albert, kneeling beside her: "and before following you to the tomb, I wished to adorn you with the emblems of marriage. Flowers do not grow around me, Consuelo. The black cypress offered the only branches from which my hand could gather your coronet of betrothal. There it is; do not despise it. If we must die here, let me swear to you that, if restored to life, I would never have had any other spouse than you; that I die united with you by an indissoluble oath."

"Betrothed! united!" cried Consuelo, casting terrified glances around her; "who has pronounced that decree? who has celebrated that marriage?"

"It is destiny, my angel," replied Albert, with an inexpressible gentleness and sadness. "Think not to escape from it. It is a strange destiny for you, and even more so for me. You forbade me a short time since to search into the past; you prohibited to me the remembrance of those bygone days which are called the night of ages. My being has obeyed you, and henceforth I know nothing of my anterior life. But my present life, I have questioned it, I know it. I have seen it entire with one glance; it appeared to me during the instant in which you reposed in the arms of death. Your destiny, Consuelo, is to belong to me, and yet you will never be mine. You do not love me, you never will love me, as I love you. Your love

for me is only charity, your devotion only heroism. You are a saint whom God sends, but you will never be a woman to me. I must die, consumed by a love you cannot partake; and yet, Consuelo, you will be my wife as you are now my betrothed, whether we perish now, and your pity consents to give me that title of husband which no kiss will ever confirm, or whether we again see the sun, and your conscience commands you to accomplish the designs of God towards me."

"Count Albert," said Consuelo, endeavouring to rise from her bed covered with bear-skins, which resembled a funereal couch, "I know not if it be the enthusiasm of a heated imagination, or the continuance of your delirium, which makes you speak thus. I have no longer the strength to dispel your illusions; and if they must turn against me—against me, who have come at the peril of my life to succour and console you—I feel that I can no longer contend with you for my life or my liberty. If the sight of me irritates you, and if God abandons me, may His will be done! You, who think you know so many things, do not know how my life has been poisoned, and with how little regret I should sacrifice it."

"I know that you are very unhappy, my poor saint. I know that you wear on your brow a crown of thorns, which I cannot tear away. The cause and the consequences of your misfortunes I do not know, neither do I ask you for them. But I should love you very little, I should be little worthy of your compassion, if from the day when I first met you I had not felt and recognised in you the sorrow which fills your soul and embitters your life. What can you fear from me, Consuelo?—from my soul? You, so firm and so wise, whom God has inspired with words which subdued and restored me in an instant, you must feel the light of your faith and your reason strangely weakened, since you fear your friend, your servant, your slave. Rouse yourself, my angel; look at me. See me here at your feet, and for ever, my forehead in the dust. What do you wish—what do you command? Do you wish to leave this place on the instant, without my following you, without my ever appearing before you again? What sacrifice do you exact? What oath do you wish me to take? I can promise you everything, and obey you in everything. Yes, Consuelo, I can even become a tranquil man, submissive, and in appearance as reasonable as other men. Should I thus be less repulsive, less terrifying to you? Hitherto I have never been able to do as I wished, but hereafter everything you desire will be granted me. Perhaps I may die in transforming myself according to your will; but I tell you in my turn that my life has ever been embittered, and that I should not regret losing it for you."

"Dear, generous Albert!" said Consuelo, reassured and greatly affected, "explain yourself more clearly, and let me at last understand the depths of your impenetrable soul. You are in my eyes superior to all other men; and from the first moment

that I saw you, I felt for you a respect and a sympathy which I have no cause to conceal. I have always heard it said that you were insane, but I have not been able to believe it. All that has been related to me of you only added to my esteem and to my confidence. Still I could not help seeing that you were overpowered by a deep and strange mental disease. I persuaded myself, presumptuously perhaps, but sincerely, that I could relieve your malady. You yourself have aided in making me think so. I have come to seek you, and now you tell me things respecting myself and you which would fill me with a boundless veneration, if you did not mix up with them strange ideas drawn from a spirit of fatalism which I cannot share. Can I say all without wounding you and making you suffer?"

"Say all, Consuelo; I know beforehand what you have to say."

"Well, I will say it, for I had so promised myself. All those who love you despair of you. They think they must respect, that is to say, spare, what they call your insanity: they fear to exasperate you by letting you see that they know it, lament it, and fear it. For myself, I cannot believe them, and cannot tremble in asking you why, being so wise, you have sometimes the appearance of an insane person; why, being so good, you perform deeds of ingratitude and pride; why, being so enlightened and religious, you abandon yourself to the reveries of a diseased and despairing mind; and lastly, why you are here alone, buried alive in a gloomy cavern—far from your family, who weep and search for you—far from your fellow-men, whom you cherish with an ardent zeal—far from me, too, whom you invoked, whom you say you love, and who has been able to reach you only by miracles of resolution and the divine protection?"

"You ask of me the secret of my life, the solution of my destiny, and yet you know it better than I do, Consuelo! It is from you I expected the revelation of my being, and you question me! Oh! I understand you; you wish to lead me to a confession, to an efficacious repentance, to a victorious resolution. You shall be obeyed. But it is not at this instant that I can know, and judge, and transform myself in this manner. Give me some days, some hours at least, to learn for myself and for you if I am mad, or if I enjoy the use of my reason. Alas! alas! both are true, and it is my misery not to be able to doubt it; but to know if I must lose my judgment and my will entirely, or if I shall be able to triumph over the demon who besieges me, that is what I cannot do at this instant. Have pity upon me, Consuelo; I am still under the influence of an emotion more powerful than myself. I know not what I have said to you; I know not how many hours you have been here; I know not how you could be here without Zdenko, who did not wish to bring you; I know not even in what region my thoughts were wandering when you first appeared to me.

Alas! I know not how many ages I have been shut up here, struggling with unheard-of sufferings against the scourge which destroys me. Even those sufferings I remember no longer when they have passed; there remains in their place only a terrible fatigue, a sort of stupor, a terror which I long to banish. Let me forget myself, Consuelo, if it be only for a few moments; my ideas will become clearer, my tongue will be loosened. I promise, I swear it to you. Let the light of truth beam softly and by degrees on my eyes, long shrouded in fearful darkness and unable to endure the full strength of its rays. You have ordered me to concentrate all my life in my heart. Yes; those were your words: my reason and my memory date no farther back than from the moment you spoke them. Well! these words have diffused an angelic calm over my spirit. My heart lives now once more, though my spirit still sleeps. I fear to speak to you of myself; I might wander, and again terrify you by my ravings. I wish to live only in feeling, and it is an unknown life to me; it would be a life of delight if I could abandon myself to it without displeasing you. Ah, Consuelo! why did you tell me to concentrate all my life in my heart? Explain your meaning; let me think only of you, see and comprehend only you—in a word, love you. O my God, I love—I love a living being!—a being like myself! I love her with all the strength of my heart and soul! I can concentrate upon her all the ardour, all the holiness of my affections. It is happiness enough for me to be allowed this, and I have not the madness to ask for more."

"Well, dear Albert, let your wearied soul repose in this sweet sentiment of a peaceful and brotherly tenderness. God is my witness that you can do so without fear and without danger; for I feel a strong and sincere friendship for you—a kind of veneration which the frivolous observations and vain judgments of the world cannot shake. You have become aware, by a sort of divine and mysterious intuition, that my whole life is broken by sorrow; you said so, and it was divine truth which prompted your words. I cannot love you otherwise than as a brother; but do not say that it is charity, pity alone, which influences me. If humanity and compassion have given me courage to come here, sympathy and a heartfelt esteem for your virtues gave me also the courage and the right to speak to you as I do. Banish, therefore, from this moment and for ever, the illusion under which you labour respecting your own feelings. Do not speak of love, do not speak of marriage. My past life, my recollections, make the first impossible; the difference in our conditions would render the second humiliating and insupportable to me. By indulging in such dreams you will render my devotion to you rash, perhaps culpable. Let us seal by a sacred promise the engagement which I make, to be your sister, your friend, your consoler, whenever you are disposed to open your heart to me; your nurse, when suffering renders you gloomy and taciturn. Swear that you will not

look on me in any other light, and that you will never love me otherwise."

"Generous woman!" said Albert, turning pale, "you reckon largely on my courage, and you know well the extent of my love, in asking of me such a promise. I should be capable of lying for the first time in my life—I could even debase myself so far as to pronounce a false oath—if you required it of me. But you will not require it of me, Consuelo; you know that this would be to introduce a new source of agitation into my life, and into my conscience a remorse which has not yet stained it. Do not be uneasy at the manner in which I love you. First of all I am ignorant of it; I only know that to deprive this affection of the name of love would be to utter a blasphemy. I submit myself to all the rest; I accept your pity, your care, your goodness, your peaceful friendship; I will speak to you only as you permit; I will not say a single word which could trouble you, nor give you a single look which could make you veil your eyes; I will not even touch your dress, if you fear being sullied by my breath. But you would be wrong to treat me with such mistrust, and you would do better to encourage in me those gentle emotions which restore us to life, and from which you can fear nothing. I can well understand that your modesty might be alarmed at the expression of a love which you do not share; I know that your pride would reject the marks of a passion which you do not wish either to excite or to encourage. Therefore be calm, and swear without fear to be my sister and my consoler, as I swear to be your brother and servant. Do not ask of me more; I will neither be indiscreet nor importunate. It is sufficient for me that you know you can command me and govern me despotically—not as you would govern a brother, but as you would dispose of a being who has given himself to you entirely and for ever."

CHAPTER XLVI.

This language reassured Consuelo for the present, but did not leave her without apprehension for the future. That Albert's fanatical self-denial had its source in a deep and unconquerable passion, the serious nature of his character and the solemnity of his countenance could leave no doubt. Consuelo, perplexed, though, at the same time, moved with compassion, asked herself if she could continue to consecrate her cares to this man, so unreservedly and unchangeably in love with her. She had never treated this sort of relation lightly in her thoughts, and she saw that with Albert no woman could enter upon it without serious consequences. She did not doubt his devotedness; but the calmness which she had flattered

herself she should restore to him must be irreconcilable with the existence of so ardent a love and the impossibility she felt of responding to it. She held out her hand to him with a sigh, and remained pensive, with her eyes fixed on the ground, and plunged in a melancholy reverie.

"Albert," said she at last, raising her eyes, and finding his anxiously fixed upon her with an expression of anguish and sorrow, "you do not know me, when you wish to impose upon me a character for which I am so ill fitted. None but a woman who would abuse it could accept it. I am neither proud nor a coquette; I think I am not vain, and I have no passion for sway. Your love would flatter me, if I could share it; and if it were so, I would tell you instantly. To afflict you in the situation in which I find you, by the reiterated assurance of the contrary, would be an act of cold-blooded cruelty which you ought to have spared me, and which is nevertheless imposed upon me by my conscience, though my heart detests it, and is deeply grieved in accomplishing it. Pity me for being obliged to afflict you, to offend you perhaps, at a moment when I would willingly give my life to restore you to happiness and health."

"I know it, high souled maiden," said Albert, with a melancholy smile. "You are so good, so great, that you would give your life for the meanest creature; but I know that your conscience will bend to no one. Do not then fear to offend me in displaying this sternness which I admire—this stoical coldness, which your virtue maintains along with the most moving pity. It is not in your power to afflict me, Consuelo. I am not the sport of illusion; I am accustomed to bitter grief; my life has been made up of painful sacrifices. Do not then treat me as a visionary, as a being without heart and without self-respect, in repeating what I already know, that you will never love me. Consuelo, I am acquainted with the circumstances of your life, although I know neither your name, nor family, nor any important fact concerning you. I know the history of your soul; the rest does not concern me. You loved, you still love, and you will always love, one of whom I know nothing, whom I do not wish to know, and with whom I shall never compete. But know, Consuelo, that you shall never be his, or mine, or even your own. God has reserved for you a separate existence, of which the events are hidden from me, but of which I foresee the object and end. The slave and victim of your own greatness of soul, you will never receive in this life other recompense than the consciousness of your own power and goodness. Unhappy in the world's estimation, you will yet be the most serene and the most fortunate of human creatures, because you will ever be the best and the most upright; for the wicked and the base, dearest sister, are alone to be pitied, and the words of Christ will remain true as long as men continue blind and unjust:—'Happy are those who are persecuted; happy those who weep, and who labour in trouble.'"

The power and dignity which were at this moment stamped upon the lofty and majestic forehead of Albert, exercised over Consuelo so great a fascination that she forgot the part of proud sovereign and austere friend, which she had imposed upon herself, to bow to the spell of this man's influence, so inspired by faith and enthusiasm. She supported herself with difficulty, still overwhelmed with fatigue and emotion, and trembling from excess of weariness, she sank on her knees, and, clasping her hands, began to pray fervently and aloud. "If thou, my God," she exclaimed, "dost put this prophecy in the mouth of a saint, thy holy will be done! In my infancy I besought from thee an innocent and childlike happiness; but thou hast reserved for me happiness under a severe and rude form, which I am unable to comprehend. Open thou mine eyes—grant me an humble and contrite heart. I am willing, O my God! to submit to this destiny, which seems so adverse, and which so slowly revealed itself, and only ask from thee that which any of thy creatures is entitled to expect from thy loving justice—faith, hope, and charity!"

While praying thus, Consuelo was bathed in tears, which she did not seek to restrain. After such feverish agitation, this paroxysm served to calm her troubled feelings, while it weakened her yet more. Albert prayed and wept along with her, blessing the tears which he had so long shed in solitude, and which now mingled with those of a pure and generous being.

"And now," said Consuelo, rising, "we have thought long enough of what concerns ourselves; it is time to think of others, and to recollect our duties to them. I have promised to restore you to your family, who already mourn and pray for you as for one dead. Do you not desire, my dear Albert, to restore joy and peace to your afflicted relatives? Will you not follow me?"

"So soon!" exclaimed the young count in despair; "separate so soon, and leave this sacred asylum, where God alone is with us—this cell, which I cherish still more since you have appeared to me in it—this sanctuary of a happiness which I shall perhaps never again experience—to return to the false and cold world of prejudices and customs. Ah! not yet, my soul, my life! Suffer me to enjoy yet a day, yet an age of delight. Let me here forget that there exists a world full of deceit and sorrow, which pursues me like a dark and troubled dream; permit me to return by slow degrees to what men call reason. I do not yet feel strong enough to bear the light of their sun and the spectacle of their madness. I require to gaze upon your face and listen to your voice yet longer. Besides, I have never left my retreat from a sudden impulse, or without long reflection—my endeared yet frightful retreat, this terrific yet salutary place of expiation, whither I am accustomed to hasten as with a wild joy, without once looking back, and which I leave with doubts but too well founded, and with lasting regret. You know not, Consuelo, what powerful ties

attach me to this voluntary prison—you know not that there is here a second self, the true Albert, who will not leave it—a self which I ever find when I return, and yet which besets me like a spectre when I leave it. Here I have conscience, faith, light, strength—in a word, life. In the world there are fear, madness, despair—passions which sometimes invade my peaceful seclusion, and engage with me in a deadly struggle. But, behold! behind this door there is an asylum where I can subdue them and become myself again. I enter sullied with their contact, and giddy from their presence—I issue purified, and no one knows what tortures purchase this patience and submission. Force me not hence, Consuelo, but suffer me gradually and by prayer to wean my attachment from the place."

"Let us then enter and pray together," said Consuelo; "we shall set out immediately afterwards. Time flies; the dawn is perhaps already near. They must remain ignorant of the path which leads to the castle, they must not see us enter together; for I am anxious not to betray the secret of your retreat, and hitherto no one suspects my discovery. I do not wish to be questioned, or to resort to falsehoods. I must be able to keep a respectful silence before your relatives, and suffer them to believe that my promises were but presentiments and dreams. Should I be seen to return with you, my absence would seem disobedience; and although, Albert, I would brave everything for you, I would not rashly alienate the confidence and affection of your family. Let us hasten then; I am exhausted with fatigue, and if I remain here much longer I shall lose all my remaining strength, so necessary for this new journey. We shall pray, and then depart."

"Exhausted, say you? Repose here then, beloved one. I will guard you religiously, or if my presence disturb you, you shall shut me up in the adjacent grotto; close this iron door between us, and whilst, sunk in slumber, you forget me, I shall, until recalled by you, pray for you in *my church*."

"But reflect that while you are praying and sunk in repose, your father suffers long hours of agony, pale and motionless as I once saw him, bowed down with age and grief, pressing with feeble knees the floor of his oratory, and apparently only awaiting the news of your death to resign his last breath. And your poor aunt's anxiety will throw her into a fever, incessantly ascending, as she does, the highest towers of the castle, vainly endeavouring to trace the paths to the mountain, by one of which it is supposed you departed. This very morning the members of your family, when they assemble together in the château, will sorrowfully accost each other with fruitless inquiries and conjectures, and again separate at night with despair and anguish in their hearts. Albert, you do not love your relatives, otherwise you would not thus, without pity or remorse, permit them to suffer and languish."

"Consuelo! Consuelo!" exclaimed Albert, as if awaking from a dream, "do not speak to me thus; your words torture me. What crime have I committed?—what disasters have I caused? Why are my friends thus afflicted? How many hours have passed since I left them?"

"You ask how many hours! Ask rather how many days—how many nights—nay, how many weeks!"

"Days!—nights! Hush! Consuelo, do not reveal to me the full extent of my misfortune. I was aware that I here lost correct ideas of time, and that the remembrance of what was passing on the earth did not descend with me into this tomb; but I did not think that the duration of this unconsciousness could be measured by days and weeks."

"Is it not, my friend, a voluntary obliviousness? Nothing in this place recalls the days which pass away and begin again: eternal darkness here prolongs the night. You have not even a glass to reckon the hours. Is not this precaution to exclude all means of measuring time, a wild expedient to escape the cries of nature and the voice of conscience?"

"I confess that when I come here, I feel it requisite to abjure everything merely human. But, O God! I did not know that grief and meditation could so far absorb my soul as to make long hours appear like days, or days to pass away as hours. What am I, and why have they never informed me of this sad change in my mental organization?"

"This misfortune is, on the contrary, a proof of great intellectual power, but diverted from its proper use, and given up to gloomy reverie. They try to hide from you the evils of which you are the cause. They respect your sufferings whilst they conceal their own. But in my opinion it was treating you with little esteem; it was doubting the goodness of your heart. But, Albert, *I* do not doubt you, and *I* conceal nothing from you."

"Let us go, Consuelo, let us go," said Albert, quickly throwing his cloak over his shoulders. "I am a wretch! I have afflicted my father whom I adore, my aunt whom I dearly love. I am unworthy to behold them again. Ah! rather than again be guilty of so much cruelty, I would impose upon myself the sacrifice of never revisiting this retreat. But, no; once more I am happy, for I have found a friend in you, Consuelo, to direct my wandering thoughts, and restore me to my former self. Some one has at length told me the truth, and will always tell it to me. Is it not so, my dear sister?"

"Always, Albert; I swear to you that you shall ever hear the truth from me."

"Power Divine! and the being who comes to my aid is she to whom alone I can listen—whom alone I can believe. The ways of God are known but to himself. Ignorant of my own mental alienation, I have always blamed the madness of others. Alas, Consuelo! had my noble father himself told me of that

which you have just disclosed, I would not have believed him. But you are life and truth; you can bring conviction, and give to my troubled soul that heavenly peace which emanates from yourself."

"Let us depart," said Consuelo, assisting him to fasten his cloak, which his trembling hand could not arrange upon his shoulders.

"Yes, let us go," said he, gazing tenderly upon her as she fulfilled this friendly office; "but first, swear to me, Consuelo, that if I return hither you will not abandon me, swear that you will come again to seek me, were it only to overwhelm me with reproaches—to call me ingrate, parricide—and to tell me that I am unworthy of your solicitude. Oh! leave me not a prey to myself, now that you see the influence you have over my actions, and that a word from your lips persuades and heals, where a century of meditation and prayer would fail."

"And will you, on your part," replied Consuelo, leaning on his shoulder, and smiling expressively, "swear never to return hither without me?"

"Will you indeed return with me!" he rapturously exclaimed, looking earnestly in her face, but not daring to clasp her in his arms; "only swear this to me, and I will pledge myself by a solemn oath never to leave my father's roof without your command or permission."

"May God hear and receive our mutual promise!" ejaculated Consuelo, transported with joy. "We will come back to pray in your church; and you, Albert, will teach me to pray, as no one has taught me hitherto; for I have an ardent desire to know God. You, my friend, will reveal heaven to me, and I when requisite will recall your thoughts to terrestrial things and the duties of human life."

"Divine sister!" exclaimed Albert, his eyes swimming in tears of delight, "I have nothing to teach you. It is you who must be the agent in my regeneration. It is from you I shall learn all things, even prayer. I no longer require solitude to raise my soul to God. I no longer need to prostrate myself over the ashes of my fathers, to comprehend and feel my own immortality. To look on you is sufficient to raise my soul to heaven in gratitude and praise."

Consuelo drew him away, she herself opening and closing the doors. "Here, Cynabre!" cried Albert to his faithful hound, giving him a lantern of better construction than that with which Consuelo was furnished, and better suited to the journey they were about to undestake. The intelligent animal seized the lamp with an appearance of pride and satisfaction, and preceded them at a measured pace, stopping when his master stopped, increasing or slackening his speed as he did, did, and sagaciously keeping the middle of the path, in order to preserve his precious charge from injury by contact with the rocks or brushwood.

Consuelo walked with great difficulty, and would have fallen twenty times but for Albert's arm, which every moment supported and raised her up. They once more descended together the course of the stream, keeping along its fresh and verdant margin.

"Zdenko," said Albert, "delights in tending the Naiad of these mysterious grottoes. He smooths her bed when encumbered as it often is with gravel and shells; he fosters the pale flowers which spring up beneath her footsteps, and protects them against her kisses, which are sometimes rather rude."

Consuelo looked upwards at the sky through the clefts of the rock, and saw a star glimmer in its blue vault. "That," said Albert, "is Aldebaran, the star of the Zingari. The day will not dawn for an hour yet."

"That is my star," replied Consuelo, "for I am, my dear Count, though not by race, by calling, a kind of Zingara. My mother bore no other name at Venice, though, in accordance with her Spanish prejudices, she disclaimed the degrading appellation. As for myself, I am still known in that country by the name of the *Zingarella*."

"Are you indeed one of that persecuted race," replied Albert; "if so, I should love you yet more than I do, were that possible."

Consuelo, who had thought it right to recall Count Rudolstadt to the disparity of their birth and condition, recollected what Amelia had said of Albert's sympathy for the wandering poor, and, fearing lest she had involuntarily yielded to an instinctive feeling of coquetry, she kept silence.

But Albert thus interrupted it in a few moments:

"What you have just told me," said he, "awakens in me, I know not by what association of ideas, a recollection of my youth, childish enough it is true, but which I must relate to you; for since I have seen you, it has again and again recurred to my memory. Lean more on me, dear sister, whilst I repeat it.

"I was about fifteen, when, returning late one evening by one of the paths which border on the Schreckenstein, and which wind through the hills in the direction of the castle, I saw before me a tall thin woman, miserably clad, who carried a burthen on her shoulders, and who paused occasionally to seat herself, and to recover breath. I accosted her. She was beautiful, though embrowned by the sun and withered by misery and care. Still there was in her bearing, mean as was her attire, a sort of pride and dignity, mingled, it is true, with an air of melancholy. When she held out her hand to me, she rather commanded pity than implored it. My purse was empty. I entreated her to accompany me to the castle, where she could have help, food, and shelter for the night.

"'I would prefer remaining here,' replied she, with a foreign accent, which I conceived to be that of the wandering Egyptians, for I was not at that time acquainted with the various lan-

guages which I afterwards learned in my travels. 'I could pay you,' she added, 'for the hospitality you offer, by singing songs of the different countries which I have traversed. I rarely ask alms unless compelled to do so by extreme distress.'

"'Poor creature!' said I, 'you bear a very heavy burden; your feet are wounded and almost naked. Entrust your bundle to me; I will carry it to my abode, and you will thus be able to walk with more ease.'

"'This burden daily becomes heavier,' she replied, with a melancholy smile, which imparted a charm to her features; 'but I do not complain of it. I have borne it without repining for years, and over hundreds of leagues. I never trust it to any one besides myself; but you appear so good and so innocent, that I shall lend it to you until we reach your home.'

"She then unloosed the clasp of her nantle, which entirely covered her, the handle of her guitar alone being visible. This movement discovered to me a child of five or six years old, pale and weather-beaten like its mother, but with a countenance so sweet and calm that it filled my heart with tenderness. It was a little girl, quite in tatters, lean, but hale and strong, and who slept tranquilly as a slumbering cherub on the bruised and wearied back of the wandering songstress. I took her in my arms, but had some trouble in keeping her there; for, waking up and finding herself with a stranger, she struggled and wept. Her mother, to soothe her, spoke to her in her own language; my caresses and attentions comforted her, and on arriving at the castle we were the best friends in the world. When the poor woman had supped, she put her infant in a bed which I had prepared, attired herself in a strange dress, sadder still than her rags, and came into the hall, where she sang Spanish, French, and German ballads, with a clearness and delicacy of voice, a firmness of intonation, united to a frankness and absense of reserve in her manner, which charmed us all. My good aunt paid her every attention, which the Zingara appeared to feel; but she did not lay aside her pride, and only gave evasive answers to our questions. The child interested me even more than its mother; and I earnestly wished to see her again, to amuse her, and even to keep her altogether. I know not what tender solicitude awoke in my bosom for this little being, poor, and a wanderer on the earth. I dreamt of her all night long, and in the morning I ran to see her. But already the Zingara had departed, and I traversed the whole mountain around without being able to discover her. She had risen before the dawn, and, with her child, had taken the way towards the south, carrying with her my guitar, which I had made her a present of, her own, to her great sorrow, being broken.

"Albert! Albert!" exclaimed Consuelo, with extraordinary emotion; "that guitar is at Venice with Master Porpora, who keeps it for me, and from whom I shall reclaim it, never to part with it again. It is of ebony, with a cipher

chased on silver—a cipher which I well remember, 'A. R.' My mother whose memory was defective, from having seen so many things, neither remembered your name nor that of your castle, nor even the country where this adventure had happened; but she often spoke of the hospitality she had received from the owner of the guitar, of the touching charity of the young and handsome signor, who had carried me in his arms for half a league, chatting with her the while as with an equal. Oh, my dear Albert, all that is fresh in my memory also. At each word of your recital, these long-slumbering images were awakened one by one; and this is the reason why your mountains did not appear absolutely unknown to me, and why I endeavoured in vain to discover the cause of these confused recollectionss which forced themselves upon me during my journey, and especially why, when I first saw you, my heart palpitated and my head bowed down respectfully, as if I had just found a friend and protector, long lost and regretted.

"Do you think, then, Consuelo," said Albert, pressing her to his heart, "that I did not recognise you at the first glance? In vain have years changed and improved the lineaments of childhood. I have a memory wonderfully retentive, though often confused and dreamy, which needs not the aid of sight or speech to traverse the space of days and of ages. I did not know that you were my cherished Zingarella, but I felt assured I had already known you, loved you, and pressed you to my heart—a heart which, although unwittingly, was from that instant bound to yours for ever."

CHAPTER XLVII.

Thus conversing, they arrived at the point where the two paths divided, and where Consuelo had met Zdenko. They perceived at a distance the light of his lantern which was placed on the ground beside him. Consuelo having learned by experience the dangerous whims, and almost incredible strength of the idiot, involuntarily pressed close to Albert, on perceiving the indication of his approach.

"Why do you fear this mild and affectionate creature?" said the young count, surprised yet secretly gratified at her terror. "Poor Zdenko loves you, although since yesternight a frightful dream has made him refractory and rather hostile to your generous project of coming to seek me. But he is, when I desire it, as submissive as a child, and you shall see him at your feet if I but say the word."

"Do not humiliate him before me," replied Consuelo; "do not increase the aversion which he already entertains for me. I shall by-and-by inform you of the serious reasons I have to fear and avoid him for the future."

"Zdenko," replied Albert, "is surely an ethereal being, and it is difficult to conceive how he could inspire any one whatever with fear. His state of perpetual ecstasy confers on him the purity and charity of angels."

"But this state of ecstasy when it is prolonged becomes a disease. Do not deceive yourself on this point. God does not wish that man should thus abjure the feeling and consciousness of his real life, to elevate himself—often by vague conceptions—to an ideal world. Madness, the general result of these hallucinations, is a punishment for his pride and indolence."

Cynabre stopped before Zdenko, and looked at him affectionately, expecting some caresses, which his friend did not deign to bestow upon him. He sat with his head buried in his hands, in the same attitude and on the same spot as when Consuelo left him. Albert addressed him in Bohemian, but he hardly answered. He shook his head with a disconsolate air; his cheeks were bathed in tears, and he would not even look at Consuelo. Albert raised his voice and addressed him with a determined air; but there was more of exhortation and tenderness than of command and reproach, in the tones of his voice. Zdenko rose at last, and offered his hand to Consuelo, who clasped it, trembling.

"From henceforward," said he in German, looking at her kindly, though sadly, "you must no longer fear me; but you have done me a great injury, and I feel that your hand is full of misfortune for us."

He walked before them, exchanging a few words with Albert from time to time. They followed the spacious and solid gallery which Consuelo had not yet traversed at this extremity, and which led them to a circular vault, where they again met the water of the fountain, flowing into a vast basin, formed by the hand of man and bordered with hammered stone. It escaped thence by two currents, one of which was lost in the caverns, the other took the direction towards the cistern of the chateau. It was this which Zdenko had closed by replacing with his Herculean hand three enormous stones which he removed when he wished to dry the cistern to the level of the arcade, and the staircase which led to Albert's terrace.

"Let us seat ourselves here," said the count to his companion, "in order to give the water of the cistern time to drain off by a waste way—"

"Which I know but too well," said Consuelo, shuddering from head to foot.

"What do you mean?" asked Albert, looking at her with surprise.

"I will tell you by-and-by," said Consuelo, "I do not wish to grieve and agitate you now by the relation of the perils which I have surmounted—"

"But what does she mean?" cried Albert, terrified, looking at Zdenko.

Zdenko replied in Bohemian with an air of indifference, while kneading with his long brown hands lumps of clay, which he placed in the interstices of his sluice, in order to hasten the draining of the cistern. "Explain yourself, Consuelo," said Albert, much agitated. "I can comprehend nothing of what he says. He pretends that he did not conduct you to this place, but that you came by subterranean passages, which I know to be impassable, and where a delicate female could never have dared to venture, nor have been able to find her way. He says (Great God! what does the unfortunate not say?) that it was destiny which conducted you, and that the archangel Michael, whom he calls the proud and domineering, caused you to pass safely through the water and the abyss."

"It is possible," said Consuelo, with a smile, "that the archangel Michael had something to do with it; for it is certain that I came by the waste-way of the fountain, that I fled before the torrent, that I gave myself up for lost two or three times, that I traversed caverns and abysses where I expected at every step to be swallowed up or suffocated; and yet these dangers were not more fearful than Zdenko's anger, when chance or Providence caused me to find the true route." Here Consuelo, who always expressed herself in Spanish with Albert, related to him in a few words the reception which his pacific Zdenko had given her, and his attempt to bury her alive which he had almost succeeded in accomplishing at the moment when she had the presence of mind to appease him by the singular watchword of the heretics. A cold perspiration burst out upon Albert's forehead on hearing these incredible details, and he often darted terrible glances at Zdenko, as if he would have annihilated him. Zdenko, on meeting them, assumed a strange expression of revolt and disdain. Consuelo trembled to see these two insane persons excited against each other; for notwithstanding the profound wisdom and lofty sentiments which characterised the greater part of Albert's conversation, it was evident to her that his reason had sustained a severe shock, from which perhaps it would never entirely recover. She tried to reconcile them by addressing affectionate words to each. But Albert, rising and giving the keys of his hermitage to Zdenko, said a few cold words to him, to which Zdenko submitted on the instant. He then resumed his lantern and went his way, singing his strange airs with their incomprehensible words.

"Consuelo," said Albert, as soon as he had retired out of sight, "if this faithful animal which lies at your feet should become mad—yes, if my poor Cynabre should endanger your life by an involuntary fury, I should certainly be obliged to kill him; and do not think that I would hesitate, though my hand has never shed blood, even that of beings inferior to man. Be tranquil, therefore, no danger will menace you hereafter."

"Of what are you speaking, Albert?" replied the young girl, agitated at this unlooked-for allusion. "I fear nothing now. Zdenko is still a man, though he has lost his reason by his own fault perhaps, and partly also by yours. Speak not of blood and punishment. It is your duty to restore him to the truth, and to cure him, instead of encouraging his insanity. Come, let us go; I tremble lest the day should dawn, and surprise us on our arrival."

"You are right," said Albert, continuing his route. "Wisdom speaks by your lips, Consuelo. My insanity has smitten that unfortunate as if by contagion, and it was quite time for you to arrive, and save us from the abyss to which we were both hastening. Restored by you, I will endeavour to restore Zdenko. And yet if I do not succeed, if his insanity again puts your life in danger, although Zdenko be a man in the sight of God, and an angel in his tenderness for me—though he be the only true friend I have hitherto had upon the earth—be assured, Consuelo, I will tear him from my heart, and you shall never see him again."

"Enough, enough, Albert!" murmured Consuelo, incapable after so many terrors of supporting a fresh one; "do not let such ideas dwell upon your mind. I would rather lose my life a hundred times, than inflict upon yours such a fearful necessity and such a cause for despair."

Albert did not heed her, and seemed absent. He forgot to support her, and did not perceive that she faltered and stumbled at every step. He was absorbed by the idea of the dangers she had incurred for his sake; and in his terror at picturing them to himself, in his ardent solicitude and excited gratitude, he walked rapidly, making the gallery resound with his hurried exclamations, and leaving her to drag herself after him with efforts which became every moment more painful. In this cruel situation, Consuelo thought of Zdenko who was behind her, and who might follow them; of the torrent which he always held, as it were, in his hand, and which he could again unchain at the moment when she was ascending the well alone, deprived of Albert's assistance; for the latter, a prey to a new fancy, thought he saw her before him, and followed a deceitful phantom, while he abandoned her to darkness. This was too much for a woman, and even for Consuelo herself. Cynabre trotted on as fast as his master, and bounded before him carrying the lantern. Consuelo had left hers in the cell. The road made numerous turns behind which the light disappeared every instant. Consuelo struck against one of those angles, fell, and could not rise again. The chill of death ran through all her limbs. A last apprehension presented itself to her mind. Zdenko had probably received orders to open the sluice-gate after a certain time, in order to conceal the staircase and the issue of the cistern, so that even if hatred did not inspire him, he would obey this neces-

sary precaution from habit. "It is accomplished then," thought Consuelo, making vain attempts to drag herself forward on her knees. "I am the victim of a pitiless destiny. I shall never escape from this cavern—my eyes will never again behold the light of day."

Already a thicker veil than that of the outward darkness spread itself over her sight; her hands became numb, and an apathy, which resembled the sleep of death, suspended her terror. Suddenly she felt herself caught and raised by a powerful arm, which drew her towards the cistern. A burning bosom beats against hers, and warms it; a friendly and caressing voice addresses her with tender words; Cynabre bounds before her, shaking the light. It is Albert, who, restored to himself, seizes and saves her, with the passionate tenderness of a mother who has lost and found her child. In three minutes they arrived at the canal which the water of the fountain had left dry, and reached the archway and the staircase. Cynabre, accustomed to this dangerous ascent, leaped forward first, as if he feared to encumber his master's steps by remaining too near him.

Albert, carrying Consuelo on one arm, and clinging with the other to the chain, ascended the spiral staircase, at the foot of which the water already began to mount also. This was not the least of the dangers which Consuelo had encountered; but she felt no fear. Albert was endowed with a herculean strength, in comparison with which Zdenko's was as a child's, and at this moment he was animated with supernatural power. When he had deposited his precious burden upon the margin of the well in the light of the breaking dawn, Consuelo, at last breathing freely, and rising from his panting breast, wiped with her veil his broad forehead bathed in perspiration. "My friend," said she, tenderly, "without you I should have died, and you have repaid all that I have done for you; but I now feel your fatigue more than you do yourself, and it seems to me that in your place I should sink under it."

"O my little Zingarella!" said Albert to her with enthusiasm, kissing the veil which she rested upon his face, "you are as light in my arms as on the day when I descended from the Schreckenstein to carry you to the château."

"Which you will not again leave without my permission, Albert; do not forget your oath."

"Nor you yours," replied he, kneeling before her. He then assisted her to wrap herself in the veil, and to cross his chamber, from which she escaped stealthily to regain her own. The family began to awake in the castle. Already from the lower story a dry and piercing cough, the signal of her rising, was heard from the canoness. Consuelo was fortunate enough not to be seen or heard by any one. Fear gave her wings to regain the shelter of her apartment. With a trembling hand she freed herself from her soiled and torn clothes,

and hid them in a trunk, from which she removed the key. She retained sufficient strength and recollection to conceal every trace of her mysterious journey; but hardly had she let her wearied head fall upon the pillow, when a heavy yet troubled sleep, full of fanciful dreams and horrible adventures, chained it there, under the weight of an overpowering and raging fever.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

In the mean time the Canoness Wenceslawa, after spending half an hour at her devotions, ascended the staircase, and according to her custom devoted the first care of the day to her dear nephew. She approached the door of his chamber, and bent her ear to the keyhole, though with less hope than ever of hearing the slight noise which would announce his return. What was her surprise and her joy on distinguishing the regular sound of his breathing during sleep! She made a great sign of the cross, and ventured to unlatch the door and enter gently on tiptoe. She saw Albert peacefully slumbering in his bed, and Cynabre curled up on a neighbouring arm-chair. She did not awake either of them, but ran to find Count Christian, who, prostrate in his oratory, prayed with his accustomed resignation that his son might be restored to him, either in heaven or upon earth.

"My brother," said she to him in a low voice, and kneeling beside him, "cease your prayers, and search your heart for the most fervent thanksgiving. God has heard you."

There was no need that she should explain herself further. The old man, turning towards her, and meeting her little sparkling eyes, animated with a profound and sympathetic joy, raised his shrivelled hands towards the altar, and cried with a smothered voice, "O my God, thou hast restored to me my son!"

Then both simultaneously began to recite in a low voice alternate verses of the beautiful song of Simeon—"*Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.*"

They resolved not to awaken Albert. They summoned the baron, the chaplain, and all the servants, and devoutly heard mass and returned thanksgiving in the chapel of the château. Amelia learned the return of her cousin with sincere joy; but she considered it very unjust that in order to celebrate this event piously, she should be obliged to undergo a mass during which she had to stifle many yawns.

"Why has not your friend, the good Porporina, joined with us in thanking Providence?" said Count Christian to his niece, when the mass was ended.

"I have tried in vain to awaken her," replied Amelia. "I called her, shook her, and used every means; but I could not succeed in making her understand, or even open her eyes. If

she were not burning hot, and red as fire, I should think her dead. She must have slept very badly last night, and she certainly has a fever."

"Then the sweet girl is ill!" returned the old count. "My dear Wenceslawa, you should go and administer such remedies as her condition may require. God forbid that so happy a day should be saddened by the suffering of that noble girl!"

"I will go, my brother," replied the canoness, who no longer said a word nor took a step respecting Consuelo, without consulting the chaplain's looks. "But do not be uneasy, Christian: it will be of no consequence. The Signora Nina is very nervous; she will soon be well."

"Still, is it not a very singular thing," said she to the chaplain an instant after, when she could take him aside, "that this girl should have predicted Albert's return with so much confidence and accuracy? Dear chaplain, possibly we have been mistaken respecting her. Perhaps she is a kind of saint who has revelations."

"A saint would have come to hear mass, instead of having the fever at such a moment," objected the chaplain, with a profound air.

This judicious remark drew a sigh from the canoness. She nevertheless went to see Consuelo, and found her in a burning fever, accompanied by an unconquerable lethargy. The chaplain was called, and declared that she would be very ill if the fever continued. He questioned the young baroness as to whether her neighbour had not passed a very disturbed night.

"On the contrary," replied Amelia, "I did not hear her move. I expected, from her predictions and the fine stories she has been telling for some days past, to have heard the *sabbat* danced in her apartment. But the devil must have carried her a great way off, or she must have had to deal with very well educated imps, for she did not move, so far as I know, and my sleep was not disturbed a single instant."

These pleasantries appeared to the chaplain to be in very bad taste; and the canoness, whose heart made amends for the failings of her mind, considered them misplaced at the bedside of a friend who was seriously ill. Still she said nothing, attributing her niece's bitterness to a too well founded jealousy, and asked the chaplain what medicines ought to be administered to the Porporina.

He ordered a sedative, which they could not make her swallow. Her teeth were locked, and her livid lips rejected all liquid. The chaplain pronounced this to be a bad sign. But with an apathy which was unfortunately too contagious in that house, he deferred until a second examination the judgment he should have pronounced upon the patient. "*We will see; we must wait; we can decide on nothing as yet:*" such were the favourite sentences of the tonsured Esculapius. "If this continues," repeated he, on quitting Consuelo's chamber, "we must consider about the propriety of calling in a physician,

for I would not take upon myself the responsibility of treating an extraordinary case of nervous affection. I will pray for this young lady; and perhaps in the state of mind which she has manifested during these last few days, we must expect from God alone, assistance more efficacious than that of art."

They left a maid-servant by the bedside of Consuelo, and went to prepare for breakfast. The canoness herself kneaded the sweetest cake that had ever been produced by her skilful hands. She flattered herself that Albert, after his long fast, would eat this favourite dish with pleasure. The lovely Amelia made a toilet charming in its freshness, hoping that her cousin might feel some regret at having offended and irritated her, when he saw her so bewitching. Every one thought of preparing some agreeable surprise for the young count, and they forgot the only one who ought to have interested them—the poor Consuelo—to whom they were indebted for his return, and whom Albert would be impatient to see again.

Albert soon awoke, and instead of making useless attempts to recall the occurrences of the preceding night, as was always the case after those fits of insanity which drove him to his subterranean abode, he promptly recovered the recollection of his love, and of the happiness which Consuelo had bestowed upon him. He rose quickly, dressed and perfumed himself, and ran to throw himself into the arms of his father and his aunt. The joy of those good relatives was at its height when they saw that Albert had full possession of his reason, that he had a consciousness of his long absence, and that he asked their forgiveness with an ardent tenderness, promising never again to cause them so much trouble and uneasiness. He saw the transports excited by his return to the knowledge of the reality; but he remarked the care they persisted in taking to conceal his situation from him, and he was somewhat humbled at being treated like a child, when he felt that he had again become a man. He submitted, however, to this punishment—too trifling in proportion to the evil he had caused—saying to himself that it was a salutary warning, and that Consuelo would be pleased at his comprehending and accepting it.

As soon as he was seated at table, in the midst of the caresses, the tears of happiness, and the earnest attentions of his family, he anxiously looked around for her who had now become necessary to his life and his peace. He saw her place empty, and dared not ask why the Porporina did not appear. Still the canoness, who saw him turn his head and start every time the door opened, thought herself obliged to relieve him from all anxiety by saying that their young guest had slept badly, that she was now quiet, and expected to keep her bed a part of the day.

Albert knew very well that his liberator must be overpowered by fatigue, and yet terror was depicted on his countenance at this news. "My dear aunt," said he, no longer able to restrain his emotion, "I think that if the adopted

daughter of Porpora were seriously indisposed, we should not all be here at table, quietly engaged in eating and talking."

"Comfort yourself, Albert," said Amelia, reddening with vexation, "Nina is busy dreaming of you, and predicting your return, which she awaits, sleeping, while we here celebrate it in joy."

Albert turned pale with indignation, and darting a withering glance at his cousin, "If any one here has slept during my absence," said he, "it is not the person whom you name, who should be reproached with it; the freshness of your cheeks, my fair cousin, testifies that you have not lost an hour of sleep during my absence, and that you have at this moment no need of repose. I thank you with all my heart, for it would be very painful for me to ask your forgiveness, as I do that of all the other members and friends of my family."

"Many thanks for the exception," returned Amelia, crimson with anger; "I will endeavour always to deserve it, by keeping my watchings and anxieties for some one who will feel obliged for them, and not turn them into a jest."

This little altercation, which was by no means a new thing between Albert and his betrothed, but which had never been so bitter on either one side or the other, threw an air of gloom and restraint over the rest of the morning, notwithstanding all the efforts which were made to divert Albert's attention.

The canoness went to see her patient several times, and found her each time more feverish and more oppressed. Amelia, whom Albert's anxiety wounded as if it had been a personal affair, went to weep in her chamber. The chaplain ventured so far as to say to the canoness that a physician must be sent for in the evening, if the fever did not abate. Count Christian kept his son near him, to distract his thoughts from an anxiety which he did not comprehend, and which he believed still to be the result of disease. But while chaining him to his side by affectionate words, the good old man could not find the least subject for conversation and intimacy with that spirit which he had never wished to sound, from the fear of being conquered and subdued by an intellect superior to his own in matters of religion. It is true that Count Christian called by the names of madness and rebellion, that bright light which pierced through the eccentricities of Albert, and the splendour of which the feeble eyes of a rigid Catholic could not endure; but he resisted the feeling which impelled him to question him seriously. Every time he had tried to correct his heresies, he had been reduced to silence by arguments full of justice and firmness. Nature had not made him eloquent. He had not that ease and animation which maintains a controversy, and still less that charlatanism of discussion which, in default of logic, imposes by an air of science and pretended certainty. Simple and modest, he allowed his lips to be closed; he reproached himself with not having turned his younger days to better account, by studying those profound arguments which

Albert opposed to him; and certain that there were in theological science, treasures of truth by means of which one more learned and skilful than himself could have crushed Albert's heresy, he clung to his shaken faith, and in order to excuse himself from acting more energetically, took refuge in his ignorance and simplicity, and thereby emboldened the rebel, and did him more harm than good.

Their conversation, interrupted twenty times by a kind of mutual fear, and twenty times resumed with effort on both sides, at last failed of itself. Old Christian fell asleep in his arm-chair, and Albert left him to go and obtain information respecting Consuelo's condition, which alarmed him the more, the more they tried to conceal it from him.

He spent more than two hours wandering about the corridors of the château, watching for the canoness and the chaplain on their passage to and fro to ask them for news. The chaplain persisted in answering him concisely and briefly; the canoness put on a smiling face as soon as she perceived him, and affected to speak of other things, in order to deceive him by an appearance of security. But Albert saw that she began to be seriously alarmed, and that she continually made more and more frequent visits to Consuelo's chamber, and he remarked that they did not fear to open and close the doors every moment, as if that sleep, which they pretended was quiet and necessary, could not be disturbed by noise and agitation. He ventured so far as to approach that chamber into which he would have given his life to penetrate for a single instant. The entrance was through another room, which was separated from the corridor by two thick doors through which neither sight nor sound could penetrate. The canoness, remarking this attempt, shut and locked both, and no longer visited the patient except by passing through Amelia's chamber, which was adjoining, and where Albert would not have sought information without extreme repugnance. At last, seeing him exasperated, and fearing the return of his disease, she ventured on a falsehood; and while asking forgiveness of God in her heart, she announced to him that the invalid was much better, and that she promised to come down and dine with the family.

Albert did not mistrust his aunt's words, whose pure lips had never sinned against truth so openly as they had just done; and he rejoined the old count, praying with fervour for the hour which was to restore to him Consuelo and happiness.

But the hour struck in vain. Consuelo did not appear. The canoness, making a rapid progress in the art of lying, told him that she had risen, but that she found herself still somewhat weak, and preferred dining in her apartment. She even pretended to send up choice portions of the most delicate dishes. These artifices triumphed over Albert's terror. Although he experienced an overpowering sadness, and as it were a presentiment of some misfortune, he submitted, and made great efforts to appear calm.

In the evening, Wenceslawa came with an air of satisfaction, which was hardly at all assumed, to say that the Porporina was better; that her skin was no longer burning; that her pulse was rather weak than full, and that she would certainly pass an excellent night. "Why then am I frozen with terror, notwithstanding these good tidings?" thought the young count, as he took leave of his relatives at the accustomed hour.

The fact was that the good canoness, who, notwithstanding her emaciation and deformity, had never been ill in her life, understood nothing of the maladies of others. She saw Consuelo pass from a fiery redness to a livid paleness, her feverish blood congeal in her arteries, and her chest, too much oppressed to be raised under the effort of respiration, appear calm and motionless. For an instant she thought her relieved, and had announced this news with a childlike confidence. But the chaplain, who was rather better informed, saw plainly that this apparent repose was the forerunner of a violent crisis. As soon as Albert had retired, he gave the canoness notice that the hour had come to send for a physician. Unfortunately the city was far distant, the night dark, the roads detestable, and Hanz very slow, notwithstanding his zeal. The storm rose, the rain fell in torrents. The old horse which carried the aged servant, stumbled twenty times, and finished by losing himself in the woods with his terrified rider, who took every hill for the Schreckenstein, and every flash of lightning for the flaming flight of an evil spirit. It was not till broad daylight that Hanz again found the road. With the speediest trot into which he could urge his steed, he approached the town, where he found the physician sound asleep: the latter was awakened, dressed himself slowly, and at last set out. Four and twenty hours had been lost in deciding upon and effecting this step.

Albert tried in vain to sleep. A burning anxiety and the fearful noises of the storm kept him awake all night. He dare not come down, fearing again to scandalize his aunt, who had lectured him in the morning on the impropriety of his continual presence near the apartment of the two young ladies. He left his door open, and heard frequent steps in the lower story. He ran to the staircase; but seeing no one, and hearing nothing more, he tried to take courage and to place to the account of the wind and the rain, the deceitful noises which had terrified him. Since Consuelo had requested it, he nursed his reason and his moral health with patience and firmness. He repelled his agitations and fears, and strove to raise himself above his love by the strength of that love itself. But suddenly, in the midst of the rattling of the thunder and the croaking of the old timbers of the chateau, which groaned under the force of the hurricane, a long, heart-rending cry ascended even to him, and pierced his bosom like the stroke of a poniard. Albert, who had thrown himself all dressed upon his bed with the resolution of going to sleep, bounds up, rushes forward, clears the staircase with the speed of lightning, and knocks at Consuelo's

door. Silence once more reigned. No one came to open it. Albert thought he had dreamed again; but a second cry, more dreadful, more piercing than the first, rent his heart. He hesitates no longer, rushes down a dark corridor, reaches the door of Amelia's chamber, shakes it and announces himself by name. He hears a bolt shot, and Amelia's voice imperiously orders him to begone. Still the cries and shrieks redouble. It is the voice of Consuelo, who is suffering intolerable agony. He hears his own name breathed with despair by those adored lips. He pushes the door with rage, makes latch and lock fly, and thrusting aside Amelia, who plays the part of outraged modesty on being surprised in a damask dressing-gown and lace cap, pushes her back upon her sofa, and rushes into Consuelo's apartment, pale as a spectre, his hair erect with terror!

CHAPTER XLIX.

Consuelo, a prey to violent delirium, was struggling in the arms of two of the most vigorous maid-servants of the house, who could hardly prevent her from throwing herself out of bed. Haunted, as happens in certain cases of brain fever, by phantoms, the unhappy girl endeavoured to fly from the visions by which she was assailed, and imagined she saw, in the persons who endeavoured to restrain and relieve her, savage enemies or monsters bent upon her destruction. The terrified chaplain, who every moment feared to see her sink under her sufferings, was already repeating by her side the prayers for the departing, but she took him for Zdenko chaunting his mysterious psalms, while he built up the wall which was to enclose her. The trembling canoness, who joined her feeble efforts with those of the other women to hold her in bed, seemed to her the phantom of the two Wandas, the sister of Ziska and the mother of Albert, appearing by turns in the grotto of the recluse, and reproaching her with usurping their rights and invading their domain. Her delirious exclamations, her shrieks, and her prayers, incomprehensible to those about her, had all a direct relation to the thoughts and objects which had so violently agitated and affected her the night before. She heard the roaring of the torrent, and imitated with her arms the motion of swimming. She shook her dark, dishevelled tresses over her shoulders, and imagined she saw floods of foam falling about her. She continually saw Zdenko behind her, engaged in opening the sluice, or before her, making frantic efforts to close the path. She talked of nothing but water and rocks, with a continued throng of images which caused the chaplain to shake his head and say: "What a long and painful dream! I cannot conceive why her mind should have been so much occupied of late with that cistern: it was doubtless a commencement of fever, and you see that in her delirium she always recurs to it.

Just as Albert entered her room, aghast, Consuelo, exhausted by fatigue, was uttering only inarticulate sounds terminating

at intervals in wild shrieks. The frightful adventures she had undergone, being no longer restrained by the power of her will, recurred to her mind with frightful intensity. In her delirium she called on Albert with a voice so full and so vibrating that it seemed to shake the whole house to its foundations; then her cries died away in long-drawn sobs which seemed to suffocate her, although her haggard eyes were dry and absolutely blazing with fever.

"I am here! I am here!" cried Albert, rushing towards the bed. Consuelo heard him, recovered all her energy, and imagining that he fled before her; disengaged herself from the hands that held her, with that rapidity of movement and muscular force which the delirium of fever gives to the weakest beings. She bounded into the middle of the room, her hair dishevelled, her feet bare, her form wrapped in a thin white night-dress, which gave her the appearance of a spectre escaped from the tomb; and just as they thought to seize her again, she leaped with the agility of a wild-cat upon the spinet which was before her, reached the window which she took for the opening of the fatal cistern, placed one foot upon it, extended her arms, and again calling on the name of Albert, in accents which floated out on the dark and stormy night, was about to dash herself down, when Albert, even more strong and agile than she, encircled her in his arms, and carried her back to her bed. She did not recognise him, but she made no resistance, and ceased to utter his name. Albert lavished upon her in Spanish the tenderest names and the most fervent prayers. She heard him with her eyes fixed, and without seeing or answering him; but suddenly rising and throwing herself on her knees in the bed, she began to sing a stanza of Handel's *Te Deum*, which she had recently read and admired. Never had her voice possessed more expression and brilliancy; never had she been more beautiful than in that ecstatic attitude, her hair flowing, her cheeks lighted up with the fire of fever, and her eyes seeming to pierce the heavens opened for them alone. The canoness was so much moved that she knelt at the foot of the bed and burst into tears; and the chaplain, notwithstanding his want of sympathy, bent his head and felt penetrated with a sentiment of pious respect. Hardly had Consuelo finished the stanza, when she uttered a deep sigh, and a holy rapture shone in her countenance. "I am saved!" cried she, and she fell backwards, pale and cold as marble, her eyes still open, but fixed and motionless, her lips blue and her arms rigid. A momentary silence and stupor succeeded to this scene. Amelia, who, erect and motionless at the door of her chamber, had witnessed the frightful spectacle without daring to move a step, fainted away with terror. The canoness and the two women ran to help her. Consuelo remained pale and motionless, resting upon Albert's arm, who had let his head fall upon the bosom of the dying girl, and appeared scarcely more alive than herself. The canoness had no sooner seen Amelia laid

upon her bed, than she returned to the threshold of Consuelo's chamber. "Well, Mr. Chaplain?" said she, dejectedly.

"Madam, it is death!" replied the chaplain in a hollow voice, letting fall Consuelo's arm, the pulse of which he had been examining attentively.

"No, it is not death! no! a thousand times no!" cried Albert, raising himself impetuously. "I have consulted her heart better than you have consulted her arm. It still beats; she breathes—she lives. Oh! she will live! It is not thus, it is not now, that her life is to end. Who is bold and rash enough to believe that God had decreed her death? Now is the time to apply the necessary remedies. Chaplain, give me your box of medicines. I know what is required, and you do not. Wretch that you are, obey me! You have not assisted her; you might have prevented this horrible crisis, you did not do it; you have concealed her illness from me; you have all deceived me. Did you wish to destroy her? Your cowardly prudence, your hideous apathy, have tied your tongue and your hands! Give me your box, I say, and let me act."

And as the chaplain hesitated to trust him with medicines, which in the hand of an excited and half frantic man might become poisons, he wrested it from him violently. Deaf to the observations of his aunt, he selected and himself poured out doses of the most powerful and active medicines. Albert was more learned on many subjects than they supposed, and had practised upon himself, at a period of his life when he had studied carefully the frequent disorders which affected his brain, and he knew the effects of the most energetic stimulants. Actuated by a prompt judgment, inspired by a courageous and resolute zeal, he administered a dose which the chaplain would never have dared to recommend. He succeeded, with incredible patience and gentleness, in unclosing the teeth of the sufferer, and making her swallow some drops of this powerful remedy. At the end of an hour, during which he several times repeated the dose, Consuelo breathed freely; her hands had recovered their warmth, and her features their elasticity. She neither heard nor felt anything yet; but her prostration seemed gradually to partake more of the nature of sleep, and a slight colour returned to her lips. The physician arrived, and seeing that the case was a serious one, declared that he had been called very late, and that he would not be answerable for the result. The patient ought to have been bled the day before; now the crisis was no longer favourable. Bleeding would certainly bring back the paroxysm. That was embarrassing.

"It will bring it back," said Albert; "and yet she must be bled."

The German physician, a heavy, self-conceited personage, accustomed, in his country practice, where he had no competitor, to be listened to as an oracle, scowlingly raised his heavy eyes towards the person who thus presumed to cut the question short.

"I tell you she must be bled," resumed Albert, firmly. "With or without bleeding the crisis will return."

"Excuse me," said Doctor Wetzelius; "that is not so certain as you seem to think." And he smiled in a disdainful and sarcastic manner.

"If the crisis do not return, all is lost," repeated Albert; "and you ought to know it. This stupor leads directly to suffusion of the brain, to paralysis and death. Your duty is to arrest the malady, to restore its intensity in order to combat it, and in the end to overcome it. If it be not so, why have you come here? Prayers and burials do not belong to you. Bleed her, or I will."

The doctor well knew that Albert reasoned justly, and he had from the first the intention of bleeding; but it was not expedient for a man of his importance to determine and execute so speedily. That would have led people to conclude that the case was a simple one and the treatment easy, and our German was therefore accustomed, on the pretence of serious difficulties and varying symptoms, to prolong his diagnosis, in order to secure in the end for his professional skill a fresh triumph as if by a sudden flash of genius, and to hear himself thus flattered, as he had been a thousand times before:—"The malady was so far advanced, so dangerous, that Doctor Wetzelius himself did not know what to determine; no other than he would have seized the moment and divined the remedy. He is very prudent, very learned, very firm. He has not his equal, even in Vienna."

"If you are a physician, and have authority here," said he, when he saw himself contradicted and put to the wall by Albert's impatience, "I do not see why I should have been called in, and I shall therefore leave the room."

"If you do not wish to decide at the proper time, you may retire," said Albert.

Doctor Wetzelius, deeply wounded at having been associated with one of the fraternity who treated him with so little deference, rose and passed into Amelia's room to attend to the nerves of that young lady, who impatiently called him, and to take leave of the canoness; but the latter prevented his sudden retreat.

"Alas, my dear doctor," said she, "you cannot abandon us in such a situation. See what heavy responsibility weighs on us. My nephew has offended you, but you should not resent so seriously the hastiness of a young man who is so little master of himself."

"Was that Count Albert?" asked the doctor, amazed. "I should never have recognised him. He is so much altered!"

"Without doubt, the ten years which have elapsed since you saw him, have made a great change in him."

"I thought him completely cured," said the doctor, maliciously; "for I have not been sent for once since his return."

"Ah! my dear doctor, you are aware that Albert never willingly submitted to the decisions of science."

"And now he appears to be a physician himself!"

"He has a slight knowledge of all sciences, but carries into all his uncontrollable impatience. The frightful state in which he has just seen this young girl has agitated him terribly, otherwise you would have seen him more polite, more calm, and grateful to you for the care you bestowed on him in his infancy."

"I think he requires care more than ever," replied the doctor, who, in spite of his respect for the Rudolstadt family, preferred afflicting the canoness by this harsh observation, to stooping from his professional position, and giving up the petty revenge of treating Albert as a madman.

The canoness suffered the more from this cruelty, that the exasperation of the doctor might lead him to reveal the condition of her nephew, which she took such pains to conceal. She therefore laid aside her dignity for the moment to disarm his resentment, and deferentially inquired what he thought of the bleeding so much insisted on by Albert.

"I think it is absurd at present," said the doctor, who wished to maintain the initiative, and allow the decision to come perfectly free from his respected lips. "I shall wait an hour or two; and if the right moment should arrive sooner than I expect, I shall act; but in the present crisis, the state of the pulse does not warrant me taking any decisive step."

"Then you will remain with us? Bless you, excellent doctor!"

"When I am now aware that my opponent is the young count," replied the doctor, smiling with a patronising and compassionate air, "I shall not be astonished at anything, and shall allow him to talk as he pleases."

And he was turning to re-enter Consuelo's apartment, the door of which the chaplain had closed to prevent Albert hearing this colloquy, when the chaplain himself, pale and bewildered, left the sick girl's couch, and came to seek the physician.

"In the name of Heaven! doctor," he exclaimed, "come and use your authority, for mine is despised, as the voice of God himself would be I believe, by Count Albert. He persists in bleeding the dying girl, contrary to your express prohibition. I know not by what force or stratagem we shall prevent him. He will maim her, if he do not kill her on the spot, by some untimely blunder."

"So, so," muttered the doctor, in a sulky tone, as he stalked leisurely towards the door, with the conceited and insulting air of a man devoid of natural feeling, "we shall see fine doings if I fail in diverting his attention in some way."

But when they approached the bed, they found Albert with his reddened lancet between his teeth: with one hand he supported Consuelo's arm, while with the other he held the basin.

The vein was open, and dark-coloured blood flowed in an abundant stream.

The chaplain began to murmur, to exclaim, and to take Heaven to witness. The doctor endeavoured to jest a little to distract Albert's thoughts, conceiving he might take his own time to close the vein, were it only to open it a moment after, that his caprice and vanity might thus enjoy all the credit of success. But Albert kept them all at a distance by a mere glance; and as soon as he had drawn a sufficient quantity of blood, he applied the necessary bandages, with the dexterity of an experienced operator. He then gently replaced Consuelo's arm by her side, handing the canoness a phial to hold to her nostrils, and called the chaplain and the doctor into Amelia's chamber.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you can now be of no further use. Indecision and prejudice united paralyze your zeal and your knowledge. I here declare that I take all the responsibility on myself, and that I will not be either opposed or molested in so serious a task. I beg therefore that the chaplain may recite his prayers and the doctor administer his potions to my cousin. I shall suffer no prognostics, nor sentences of death around the bed of one who will soon regain her consciousness. Let this be settled. If in this instance I offend a learned man—if I am guilty of culpable conduct towards a friend—I shall ask pardon when I can once more think of myself."

After having thus spoken in a tone, the serious and studied politeness of which was in strong contrast with the coldness and formality of his words, Albert re-entered Consuelo's apartment, closed the door, put the key in his pocket, and said to the canoness: "No one shall either enter or leave this room without my permission."

CHAPTER L.

The terrified canoness dared not venture a word in reply. There was something so resolute in Albert's air and demeanour that his good aunt quailed before it, and obeyed him with an alacrity quite surprising in her. The physician finding his authority despised, and not caring, as he afterwards affirmed, to encounter a madman, wisely determined to withdraw. The chaplain betook himself to his prayers, and Albert, assisted by his aunt and two of the domestics, remained the whole day with his patient, without relaxing his attentions for an instant. After some hours of quiet, the paroxysm returned with an intensity almost greater than that of the preceding night. It was however of shorter duration, and when it yielded to the effect of powerful remedies, Albert desired the canoness to retire to rest, and to send him another female domestic to assist him while the two others took some repose.

"Will you not also take some rest?" asked Wenceslawa, trembling.

"No, my dear aunt," he replied, "I require none."

"Alas! my child," said she, "you will kill yourself, then," and she added as she left the room, emboldened by the abstraction of the count, "This stranger costs us dear."

He consented however to take some food, in order to keep up his strength. He ate standing in the corridor, his eye fixed upon the door, and as soon as he had finished his hasty repast, he threw down the napkin, and re-entered the room. He had closed the communication between the chamber of Consuelo and that of Amelia, and only allowed the attendants to gain access by the gallery. Amelia wished to be admitted to tend her suffering companion; but she went so awkwardly about it, and, dreading the return of convulsions, displayed such terror at every feverish movement, that Albert became irritated, and begged her not to trouble herself further but retire to her own apartment.

"To my apartment!" exclaimed Amelia; "impossible!—do you imagine I could sleep with these frightful cries of agony ringing in my ears?"

Albert shrugged his shoulders, and replied that there were many other apartments in the castle, of which she might select the best, until the invalid could be removed to one where her proximity should annoy no one.

Amelia, irritated and displeased, followed the advice. To witness the delicate care which Albert displayed towards her rival was more painful than all. "O, aunt!" she exclaimed, throwing herself into the arms of the canoness, when the latter had brought her to sleep in her own bedroom, where she had a bed prepared for her beside her own, "we did not know Albert. He now shows how he can love."

For many days Consuelo hovered between life and death; but Albert combated her malady with such perseverance and skill as finally to conquer it. He bore her through this rude trial in safety; and as soon as she was out of danger, he caused her to be removed to an apartment in a turret of the castle, where the sun shone for the longest time, and where the view was more extensive and varied than from any of the other windows. This chamber, furnished after an antique fashion, was more in unison with the serious tastes of Consuelo than the one they had first prepared for her, and she had long evinced a desire to occupy it. Here she was free from the importunities of her companion, and in spite of the continual presence of a nurse, who was engaged each morning and evening, she could enjoy the hours of convalescence agreeably with her preserver. They always conversed in Spanish, and the tender and delicate manifestation of Albert's love was so much the sweeter to Consuelo in that language which recalled her country, her childhood, and her mother. Imbued with the liveliest gratitude, weakened by sufferings in which Albert alone had effectively aided and consoled her, she submitted to that gentle lassitude which is the result of severe indisposition. Her recollections

of the past returned by degrees, but not with equal distinctness. For example, if she recalled with undisguised satisfaction the support and devotion of Albert, during the principal events of their acquaintance, she saw his mental estrangement, and his somewhat gloomy passion, as through a thick cloud. There were even hours, during the half consciousness of sleep, or after composing draughts, when she imagined that she had dreamed many of the things that could give cause for distrust or fear of her generous friend. She was so much accustomed to his presence and his attentions, that if he absented himself at prayer or at meals, she felt nervous and agitated until his return. She fancied that her medicines, when prepared and administered by any other hand than his, had an effect the contrary of that which was intended. She would then observe with a tranquil smile, so affecting on a lovely countenance half veiled by the shadow of death: "I now believe, Albert, that you are an enchanter; for if you order but a single drop of water, it produces in me the same salutary calmness and strength which exist in yourself."

Albert was happy for the first time in his life; and as if his soul was strong in joy as it had been in grief, he deemed himself, at this period of intoxicating delight, the most fortunate man on earth. This chamber where he constantly saw his beloved one had become his world. At night, after he was supposed to have retired, and every one was thought asleep in the house, he returned with stealthy steps; and while the nurse in charge slept soundly, he glided behind the bed of his dear Consuelo, and watched her sleeping, pale and drooping like a flower after the storm. He settled himself in a large armchair, which he took care to leave there when he went away, and thus passed the night, sleeping so lightly that at the least movement of Consuelo, he awoke and bent towards her to catch her faint words: or his ready hand received hers when, a prey to some unhappy dream, she was restless and disquieted. If the nurse chanced to awake, Albert declared he had just come in, and she rested satisfied that he merely visited his patient once or twice during the night, while in reality he did not waste half an hour in his own chamber. Consuelo shared this feeling, and although discovering the presence of her guardian much more frequently than that of the nurse, she was still so weak as to be easily deceived both as to the number and duration of his visits. Often when, after midnight, she found him watching over her, and besought him to retire and take a few hours repose, he would evade her desire by saying that it was now near daybreak, and that he had just risen. These innocent deceptions excited no suspicion in the mind of Consuelo of the fatigue to which her lover was subjecting himself; and to them it was owing that she seldom suffered from the absence of Albert. This fatigue, strange as it may appear, was unperceived by the young count himself: so true is it that love imparts strength to the weakest. He possessed, however, a

powerful organization; and he was animated, besides, by a love as ardent and devoted as ever fired a human breast.

When, during the first warm rays of the sun, Consuelo was able to bear removal to the half-open window, Albert seated himself behind her, and sought in the course of the clouds and in the purple tints of the sunbeams, to divine the thoughts with which the aspect of the skies inspired his silent friend. Sometimes he silently took a corner of the veil with which she covered her head, and which a warm wind floated over the back of the sofa, and bending forward his forehead as if to rest, pressed it to his lips. One day Consuelo, drawing it forward to cover her chest, was surprised to find it warm and moist; and turning more quickly than she had done since her illness, perceived some extraordinary emotion on the countenance of her friend. His cheeks were flushed, a feverish fire shone in his eyes, while his breast heaved with violent palpitations. Albert quickly recovered himself, but not before he had perceived terror depicted on the countenance of Consuelo. This deeply afflicted him. He would rather have witnessed there an emotion of contempt, or even of severity, than a lingering feeling of fear and distrust. He resolved to keep so careful a watch over himself, that no trace of his aberration of mind should be visible to her who had cured him of it, almost at the price of her own life.

He succeeded, thanks to a superhuman power, and one which no ordinary man could have exercised. Accustomed to repress his emotions, and to enjoy the full scope of his desires, when not incapacitated by his mysterious disease, he restrained himself to an extent that he did not get credit for. His friends were ignorant of the frequency and force of the attack which he had every day to overcome, until overwhelmed by despair, he fled to his secret cavern—a conqueror even in defeat, since he still maintained sufficient circumspection to hide from all eyes the spectacle of his fall. Albert's madness was of the most unhappy and yet elevated stamp. He knew his madness and felt its approach, until it had completely laid hold of and overpowered him. Yet he preserved in the midst of his attacks the vague and confused remembrance of an external world, in which he did not wish to reappear, whilst he felt his relations with it not perfectly established. This memory of an actual and real life we all retain, when, in the dreams of a painful sleep, we are transported into another life—a life of fiction and indefinable visions. We occasionally struggle against these fantasies and terrors of the night, assuring ourselves that they are merely the effects of nightmare, and making efforts to awake; but on such occasions a hostile power appears to seize upon us at every effort, and to plunge us again into a horrible lethargy, where terrible spectacles, ever growing more gloomy, close around us, and where griefs the most poignant assail and torture us.

In alternations of being which bore a striking analogy to the

state we have described, passed the miserable life of this powerful intellect, so totally misunderstood by all around him, and whom an active yet delicate and discriminating tenderness alone, could have saved from his own distresses. This tenderness had at last been manifested. Consuelo was, of a truth, the pure and heavenly soul which seemed formed to find access to that sombre and gloomy spirit, hitherto closed to all sympathy. There was something sweet and touching in the solicitude which a romantic enthusiasm had first aroused in the young girl, and in the respectful friendship with which gratitude inspired in her since her illness, and which God doubtless knew to be peculiarly fitted for Albert's restoration. It is highly probable, that if Consuelo, forgetful of the past, had shared the ardour of his passion, transports so new to him and joy so sudden, would have had the most fatal effects. The discreet and chastened friendship which she felt for him, was calculated to have a slower but a more certain effect upon his health. It was a restraint as well as a benefit; and if there was a sort of intoxication in the renewed heart of the young count, there was mingled with it an idea of duty and of sacrifice, which gave other employment and another object to his will, than those which had hitherto consumed him. He therefore experienced, at the same time, the happiness of being loved as he had never been before, the grief of not being so with the ardour he himself felt, and the fear of losing his happiness if he did not appear contented with it. This threefold effect of his love soon filled his soul so completely, as to leave no room for the reveries towards which his inaction and solitude had so long compelled him to turn. He was delivered from them as by the power of enchantment; for they faded from his memory, and the image of her whom he loved kept his enemies at a distance, and seemed placed between them and himself like a celestial buckler.

That repose of spirit and calmness of feeling, which were so necessary to the re-establishment of the young patient, were hereafter therefore no more than very slightly and very rarely troubled by the secret agitations of her physician. Like the hero of the fable, Consuelo had descended into Tartarus to draw her friend thence, and had brought after her horror and frenzy. In his turn, he applied himself to deliver her from the inauspicious guests who had followed her, and he succeeded by means of delicate attentions and passionate respect. They began a new life together, resting on each other, not daring to look forward, and not feeling courage to plunge back in thought into the abyss they had passed through. The future was a new abyss, not less mysterious and terrible, which they did not venture to fathom. But they calmly enjoyed the present, like a season of grace which was granted them by Heaven.

CHAPTER LI.

THE other inhabitants of the castle were by no means so tranquil. Amelia was furious, and no longer deigned even to visit the invalid. She affected not to speak to Albert, never turned her eyes towards him, and never answered his morning and evening salutation. And the most provoking part of the affair was, that Albert did not seem to pay the least attention to her vexation.

The canoness, seeing the very evident, and, as it were, declared passion of her nephew for the *adventuress*, had not a moment's peace. She racked her brains to find some means of putting a stop to the danger and scandal, and to this end she had long conferences with the chaplain. But the latter did not very earnestly desire the termination of such a state of things. He had for a long time past been useless and unnoticed amidst the cares of the family, but since these new and agitating occurrences, his post had recovered a kind of importance, and he could at least enjoy the pleasure of spying, revealing, warning, predicting, consulting—in a word, moving the domestic interests at his will, while he had the air of not interfering, and could hide himself from the indignation of the young count behind the old aunt's petticoats. Between them both they continually found new subjects of alarm, new motives for precaution, but no means of safety. Every day the good Wenceslawa approached her nephew with a decisive explanation on the tip of her tongue, and every day a mocking smile or a freezing look caused the words to miscarry. Every instant she watched for an opportunity of slipping secretly into Consuelo's chamber, in order to administer a skilful and firm reprimand, but every instant Albert, as if warned by a familiar spirit, came to place himself upon the threshold of the chamber; and by a single frown, like the Olympian Jupiter, he disarmed the anger, and froze the courage of the divinities hostile to his beloved Ilion. Nevertheless the canoness had several times engaged the invalid in conversation; and as the moments when she could enjoy a *tête-a-tête* were very rare, she had profited by these occasions to address some very absurd reflections to her, which she thought exceedingly significant. But Consuelo was so far removed from the ambition attributed to her, that she understood nothing of it. Her astonishment and her air of candour and confidence, immediately disarmed the good canoness, who, in all her life, could never resist a frank manner or a cordial caress. She hastened in confusion to confess her defeat to the chaplain, and the rest of the day was passed in planning measures for the morrow.

In the meantime, Albert, divining this management very clearly, and seeing that Consuelo began to be astonished and uneasy, resolved to put a stop to it. One morning he watched

Wenceslawa as she passed, and while she thought to elude him by surprising Consuelo alone at that early hour, he suddenly appeared just at the moment when she was putting her hand to the key in order to enter the invalid's chamber.

"My good aunt," said he, seizing her hand and carrying it to his lips, "I must whisper in your ear something in which you are very much interested. It is that the life and health of the person who reposes within, are more precious to me than my own life and my own happiness. I know very well that your confessor has made it a point of conscience with you to thwart my devotion towards her, and to destroy the effect of my cares. Without that, your noble heart would never have conceived the idea of endangering, by bitter words and unjust reproaches, the recovery of an invalid hardly yet out of danger. But since the fanaticism or bitterness of a priest can perform such prodigies as to transform the most sincere piety and the purest charity into blind cruelty, I shall oppose with all my power the crime of which my poor aunt consents to be made the instrument. I shall watch over my patient night and day, and no longer leave her for a moment; and if, notwithstanding my zeal, you succeed in carrying her away from me, I swear by all that is most sacred to human belief, that I will leave the house of my fathers never to return. I trust that when you have communicated my determination to the chaplain, he will cease tormenting you, and combating the generous instincts of your affectionate heart."

The amazed canoness could only reply to this discourse by melting into tears. Albert had led her to the end of the gallery, so that the explanation could not be heard by Consuelo. She complained of the threatening tone which Albert employed, and endeavoured to profit by the occasion, to show him the folly of his attachment towards a person of such low birth as Nina.

"Aunt," replied Albert, smiling, "you forget that if we are of the royal blood of the Podiebrads, our ancestors were kings only through favour of the peasants and revolted soldiery. A Podiebrad, therefore, should not pride himself on his noble origin, but rather regard it as an additional motive to attach him to the weak and the poor, since it is among them that his strength and power have planted their roots, and not so long ago that he can have forgotten it."

When Wenceslawa related this conference to the chaplain, he gave it as his opinion that it would not be prudent to exasperate the young count by remonstrances, nor drive him to extremity by annoying his protegée.

"It is to Count Christian himself that you must address your representations," said he. "Your excessive delicacy has too much emboldened the son. Let your wise remonstrances at length awaken the disquietude of his father, that he may take decisive measures with respect to this dangerous person."

"Do you suppose," replied the canoness, "that I have not

already done so? But alas! my brother has grown fifteen years older during the fifteen days of Albert's last disappearance. His mind is so enfeebled that it is no longer possible to make him understand any suggestion. He appears to indulge in a sort of passive resistance to the idea of a new calamity of this description, and rejoices like a child at having found his son, and at hearing him reason and conduct himself as an intelligent man. He believes him cured of his malady, and does not perceive that poor Albert is a prey to a new kind of madness, more fatal than the first. My brother's security in this respect is so great, and he enjoys it so unaffectedly, that I have not yet found courage to open his eyes completely as to what is passing around him. It seems to me that this disclosure coming from you, and accompanied with your religious exhortations, would be listened to with more resignation, have a better effect, and be less painful to all parties."

"It is too delicate an affair," replied the chaplain, "to be undertaken by a poor priest like me. It will come much better from a sister, and your highness can soften the bitterness of the event, by expressions of tenderness which I could not venture upon towards the august head of the Rudolstadt family."

These two grave personages lost many days in deciding upon which should bell the cat. During this period of irresolution and apathy, in which habit also had its share, love made rapid progress in the heart of Albert. Consuelo's health was visibly restored, and nothing occurred to disturb the progress of an intimacy which the watchfulness of Argus could not have rendered more chaste and reserved, than it was simply through true modesty and sincere love.

Meantime the Baroness Amelia, unable to support her humiliation, earnestly entreated her father to take her back to Prague. Baron Frederick, who preferred a life in the forest to an abode in the city, promised everything that she wished, but put off from day to day the announcement and preparations for departure. The baroness saw that it was necessary to urge matters on to suit her purpose, and devised one of those ingenious expedients in which her sex are never wanting. She had an understanding with her waiting-maid—a sharp-witted and active young Frenchwoman—and one morning, just as her father was about to set out for the chase, she begged him to accompany her in a carriage to the house of a lady of their acquaintance, to whom she had for a long time owed a visit. The baron had some difficulty in giving up his gun and his powder-horn to change his dress and the employment of the day, but he flattered himself that this condescension would render Amelia less exacting, and that the amusement of the drive would dissipate her ill-humour, and enable her to pass a few more days at the Castle of the Giants without murmuring. When the good man had obtained a respite of a week he fancied he had secured the independence of his life;

his forethought extended no further. He therefore resigned himself to the necessity of sending Sapphire and Panther to the kennel, while Attila, the hawk, turned upon its perch with a discontented and mutinous air, which forced a heavy sigh from its master.

The baron at last seated himself in the carriage with his daughter, and in three revolutions of the wheel was fast asleep. The coachman then received orders from Amelia to drive to the nearest post-house. They arrived there after two hours of a rapid journey; and when the baron opened his eyes, he found post-horses in his carriage, and everything ready to set out on the road to Prague.

"What means this?" exclaimed the baron; "where are we, and whither are we going? Amelia, my dear child, what folly is this? what is the meaning of this caprice, or rather this pleasantry with which you amuse yourself?"

To all her father's questions the young baroness only replied by repeated bursts of laughter, and by childish caresses. At length when she saw the postillion mounted, and the carriage roll lightly along the highway, she assumed a serious air, and in a very decided tone spoke as follows: "My dear papa, do not be uneasy; all our luggage is carefully packed. The carriage trunks are filled with all that is necessary for our journey. There is nothing left at the Castle of the Giants, except your dogs and guns, which will be of no use at Prague; and besides you can have them whenever you wish to send for them. A letter will be handed to uncle Christian at breakfast, which is so expressed, as to make him see the necessity of our departure, without unnecessarily grieving him, or making him angry either with you or me. I must now humbly beg your pardon for having deceived you, but it is nearly a month since you consented to what I at this moment execute. I do not oppose your wishes therefore in returning to Prague; I merely chose a time when you did not contemplate it, and I would wager that, after all, you are delighted to be freed from the annoyance which the quickest preparations for departure entail. My position became intolerable, and you did not perceive it. Kiss me, dear papa, and do not frighten me with those angry looks of yours."

In thus speaking, Amelia, as well as her attendant, stifled a great inclination to laugh, for the baron never had an angry look for any one, much less for his cherished daughter. He only rolled his great bewildered eyes, a little stupified it must be confessed by surprise. If he experienced any annoyance at seeing himself fooled in such wise, and any real vexation at leaving his brother and sister without bidding them adieu, he was so astonished at the turn things had taken, that his uneasiness changed into admiration of his daughter's tact, and he could only exclaim—

"But how could you arrange everything, so that I had not the least suspicion? Faith, I little thought when I took off my boots, and sent my horse back to the stable, that I was off for

Prague, and that I should not dine to-day with my brother. It is a strange adventure, and nobody will believe me when I tell it. But where have you put my travelling cap, Amelia? who could sleep in a carriage with this hat glued to one's ears?"

"Here it is, dear papa," said the merry girl, presenting him with his fur cap, which he instantly placed on his head with the utmost satisfaction.

"But my bottle? you have certainly forgotten it, you little wicked one."

"Oh! certainly not," she exclaimed, handing him a large crystal flask, covered with Russia leather and mounted with silver. "I filled it myself with the best Hungary wine from my aunt's cellar. But you had better taste it yourself; I know it is the description you prefer."

"And my pipe and pouch of Turkish tobacco?"

"Nothing is forgotten," said Amelia's maid; "his excellency the baron will find everything packed in the carriage. Nothing has been omitted to enable him to pass the journey agreeably."

"Well done!" said the baron, filling his pipe, "but that does not clear you of all culpability in this matter, my dear Amelia. You will render your father ridiculous, and make him the laughingstock of every one."

"Dear papa, it is I who seem ridiculous in the eyes of the world, when I apparently refuse to marry an amiable cousin, who does not even deign to look at me, and who, under my very eyes, pays assiduous court to my music mistress. I have suffered this humiliation long enough, and I do not think there are many girls of my rank, my age, and my appearance, who would not have resented it more seriously. Of one thing I am certain, that there are girls who would not have endured what I have done for the last eighteen months; but, on the contrary, would have put an end to the farce by running off with themselves, if they had failed in procuring a partner in their flight. For my part I am satisfied to run off with my father; it is a more novel as well as more proper step. What think you, dear papa?"

"Why, I think the devil's in you," replied the baron, kissing his daughter; and he passed the rest of his journey gaily, drinking, eating, and smoking by turns, without making any farther complaint, or expressing any farther astonishment.

This event did not produce the sensation in that family at the Castle of the Giants which the little baroness had flattered herself it would do. To begin with Count Albert, he might have passed a week without noticing the absence of the young baroness, and when the canoness informed him of it, he merely remarked: "This is the only clever thing which the clever Amelia has done since she set foot here. As to my good uncle, I hope he will soon return to us."

"For my part," said old Count Christian, "I regret the departure of my brother, because at my age one reckons by weeks and days. What is not long for you, Albert, is an eternity for me, and I am not so certain as you are of seeing my peaceful

and easy-tempered Frederick again. Well, it is all Amelia's doings," added he, smiling as he threw aside the saucy yet cajoling letter of the young baroness. "Women's spite pardons not. You were not formed for each other, my children, and my pleasant dreams have vanished."

While thus speaking, the old Count fixed his eyes upon the countenance of his son with a sort of melancholy satisfaction, as if anticipating some indication of regret; but he found none, and Albert, tenderly pressing his arm, made him understand that he thanked him for relinquishing a project so contrary to his inclination.

"God's will be done," ejaculated the old man, "and may your heart, my son, be free. You are now well, happy, and contented amongst us. I can now die in peace, and a father's love will comfort you after our final separation."

"Do not speak of separation, dear father," exclaimed the young count, his eyes suddenly filling with tears; "I cannot bear the idea."

The canoness, who began to be affected, received at this moment a significant glance from the chaplain, who immediately rose, and with feigned discretion left the room. This was the signal and the order. She thought, not without regret and apprehension, that the moment was at length come when she must speak, and closing her eyes like a person about to leap from the window of a house on fire, she thus began—stammering and becoming paler than usual:—

"Certainly Albert loves his father tenderly, and would not willingly inflict on him a mortal blow."

Albert raised his head, and gazed at his aunt with such a keen and penetrating look that she could not utter another word. The old count appeared not to have heard this strange observation, and in the silence which followed, poor Wenceslawa remained trembling beneath her nephew's glance, like a partridge fascinated before the pointer.

But Count Christian, rousing from his reverie after a few minutes, replied to his sister as if she had continued to speak, or as if he had read in her mind the revelations she was about to make.

"Dear sister," said he, "if I may give you an advice, it is not to torment yourself with things which you do not understand. You have never known what it was to love, and the austere rules of a canoness are not those which befit a young man."

"Good God!" murmured the astonished canoness. "Either my brother does not understand me, or his reason and piety are about to desert him. Is it possible that in his weakness he would encourage or treat lightly——"

"How? aunt!" interrupted Albert, in a firm tone, and with a stern countenance. "Speak out, since you are forced to it. Explain yourself clearly; there must be an end to this constraint—we must understand each other."

"No, sister; you need not speak," replied the count; "you have nothing new to tell me. I understand perfectly well, without having seemed to do so, what has been going on for some time past. The period is not yet come to explain ourselves on that subject; when it does, I shall know how to act."

He began immediately to speak on other subjects, and left the canoness astonished, and Albert hesitating and troubled. When the chaplain was informed of the manner in which the head of the family received the counsel which he had indirectly given him, he was seized with terror. Count Christian, although seemingly irresolute and indolent, had never been a weak man, and sometimes surprised those who knew him, by suddenly arousing himself from a kind of somnolency, and acting with energy and wisdom. The priest was afraid of having gone too far, and of being reprimanded. He commenced therefore to undo his work very quickly, and persuaded the canoness not to interfere further. A fortnight glided away in this manner without anything suggesting to Consuelo that she was a subject of anxiety to the family. Albert continued his attentions, and announced the departure of Amelia as a short absence, but did not suffer her to suspect the cause. She began to leave her apartment; and the first time she walked in the garden, the old Christian supported the tottering steps of the invalid on his weak and trembling arm.

CHAPTER LII.

It was indeed a happy day for Albert when he saw her whom he had restored to life, leaning on the arm of his father, and offer him her hand in the presence of his family, saying, with an ineffable smile, "This is he who saved me, and tended me as if I had been his sister."

But this day, which was the climax of his happiness, changed suddenly, and more than he could have anticipated, his relations with Consuelo. Henceforth, the formalities of the family circle precluded her being often alone with him. The old count, who appeared to have even a greater regard for her than before her illness, bestowed the utmost care upon her, with a kind of paternal gallantry which she felt deeply. The canoness observed a prudent silence, but nevertheless made it a point to watch over all her movements, and to form a third party in all her interviews with Albert. At length, as the latter gave no indication of returning mental alienation, they determined to have the pleasure of receiving, and even inviting, relations and neighbours long neglected. They exhibited a kind of simple and tender ostentation in showing how polite and sociable the young Count Rudolstadt had become, and Consuelo seemed to exact from him, by her looks and example, the fulfilment of the wishes of his relations, in exercising the duties of a hospitable host, and displaying the manners of a man of the world.

This sudden transformation cost him a good deal: he sub-

mitted to it, however, to please her he loved, but he would have been better satisfied with longer conversations and a less interrupted intercourse with her. He patiently endured whole days of constraint and annoyance, in order to obtain in the evening a word of encouragement or gratitude. But when the canoness came, like an unwelcome spectre, and placed herself between them, he felt his soul troubled and his strength abandon him. He passed nights of torment, and often approached the cistern, which remained clear and pellucid since the day he had ascended from it, bearing Consuelo in his arms. Plunged in mournful reverie, he almost cursed the oath which bound him never to return to his hermitage. He was terrified to feel himself thus unhappy, and not to have the power of burying his grief in his subterranean retreat.

The change in his features after this sleeplessness, and the transitory but gradually more frequent return of his gloomy and distracted air, could not fail to excite the observation of his relatives and his friend; but the latter found means to disperse these clouds and regain her empire over him whenever it was threatened. She commenced to sing, and immediately the young count, charmed or subdued, was consoled by tears, or animated with new enthusiasm. This was an infallible remedy; and when he was able to address a few words to her in private, "Consuelo," he exclaimed, "you know the paths to my soul; you possess the power refused to the common herd, and possess it more than any other being in this world. You speak in language divine; you know how to express the most sublime emotions, and communicate the impulses of your own inspired soul. Sing always when you see me downcast: the words of your songs have but little sense for me, they are but the theme, the imperfect indication on which the music turns and is developed. I hardly hear them: what alone I hear, and what penetrates into my very soul, is your voice, your accent, your inspiration. Music expresses all that the mind dreams and foresees of mystery and grandeur. It is the manifestation of a higher order of ideas and sentiments than any to which human speech can give expression. It is the revelation of the infinite; and when you sing, I only belong to humanity in so far as humanity has drunk in what is divine and eternal in the bosom of the Creator. All that your lips refuse of consolation and support in the ordinary routine of life—all that social tyranny forbids your heart to reveal—your songs convey to me a hundredfold. You then respond to me with your whole soul, and my soul replies to yours in hope and fear, in transports of enthusiasm and rapture."

Sometimes Albert spoke thus, in Spanish, to Consuelo in presence of his family; but the evident annoyance which the canoness experienced, as well as a sense of propriety, prevented the young girl from replying. At length one day when they were alone in the garden, and he again spoke of the pleasure he felt in hearing her sing:—

"Since music is a language more complete and more persuasive than that of words," said she, "why do you not speak thus to me, you who understand it better than I do?"

"I do not understand you, Consuelo," said the young count, surprised; "I am only a musician in listening to you."

"Do not endeavour to deceive me," she replied; "I never but once heard sounds divinely human drawn from the violin, and it was by you, Albert, in the grotto of the Schreckenstein. I heard you that day before you saw me; I discovered your secret; but you must forgive me, and allow me again to hear that delightful air, of which I recollect a few bars, and which revealed to me beauties in music, to which I was previously a stranger."

Consuelo sang in a low tone a few phrases which she recollected indistinctly, but which Albert immediately recognised.

"It is a popular hymn," said he, "on some Hussite words. The words are by my ancestor, Hyncko Podiebrad, the son of King George, and one of the poets of the country. We have an immense number of admirable poems by Streye, Simon Lomnicky, and many others, which are prohibited by the police. These religious and national songs, set to music by the unknown geniuses of Bohemia, are not all preserved in the memory of her inhabitants. The people retain some of them however, and Zdenko, who has an extraordinary memory and an excellent taste for music, knows a great many, which I have collected and arranged. They are very beautiful, and you will have pleasure in learning them. But I can only let you hear them in my hermitage; my violin, with all my music, is there. I have there precious manuscripts, collections of ancient Catholic and Protestant authors. I will wager that you do not know either Josquin, many of whose themes Luther has transmitted to us in his choruses, nor the younger Claude, nor Arcadelt, nor George Rhaw, nor Benoit Ducis, nor John de Weiss. Would not this curious research induce you, dear Consuelo, to pay another visit to my grotto, from which I have been exiled so long a time, and to visit my church, which you have not yet seen?"

This proposal, although it excited the curiosity of the young artiste, was tremblingly listened to. This frightful grotto recalled recollections which she could not think of without a shudder, and in spite of all the confidence she placed in him, the idea of returning there alone with Albert caused a painful emotion, which he quickly perceived.

"You dislike the idea of this pilgrimage," said he, "which nevertheless you promised to renew: let us speak of it no more. Faithful to my oath, I shall never undertake it without you."

"You remind me of mine, Albert," she replied, "and I shall fulfil it as soon as you ask it; but, my dear doctor, you forget that I have not yet the necessary strength. Would you not first permit me to see this curious music, and hear this admirable artist, who plays on the violin much better than I sing?"

"I know not if you jest, dear sister, but this I know, that you shall hear me nowhere but in my grotto. It was there I first tried to make my violin express the feelings of my heart; for, although I had for many years a brilliant and frivolous professor, largely paid by my father, I did not understand it. It was there I learned what true music is, and what a sacrilegious mockery is substituted for it by the greater portion of mankind. For my own part, I declare that I could not draw a sound from my violin if my spirit were not bowed before the divinity. Were I even to see you unmoved beside me, attentive merely to the composition of the pieces I play, and curious to scrutinize my talent, I doubt not that I would play so ill that you would soon weary of listening to me. I have never, since I knew how to use it, touched the instrument consecrated by me to the praise of God or to the expression of my ardent prayers, without feeling myself transported into an ideal world, and without obeying a sort of mysterious inspiration not always under my control."

"I am not unworthy," replied Consuelo, deeply impressed, and all attention, "to comprehend your feelings with regard to music. I hope soon to be able to join your prayer with a soul so fervent and collected that my presence shall not interfere with your inspiration. Ah, my dear Albert, why cannot my master Porpora hear what you say of the heavenly art? He would throw himself at your feet. Nevertheless, this great artist himself is less severe in his views on this subject than you are. He thinks the singer and the virtuoso should draw their inspiration from the sympathy and admiration of their auditory.

"It is perhaps because Porpora confounds, in music, religious sentiment with human thought, and that he looks upon sacred music with the eyes of a Catholic. If I were in his place I would reason as he does. If I were in a communion of faith and sympathy with a people professing the same worship as myself, I would seek in contact with these souls, animated with a like religious sentiment, the inspiration which heretofore I have been forced to court in solitude, and which consequently I have hitherto imperfectly realised. If ever I have the pleasure of mingling the tones of my violin with those of your divine voice, Consuelo, doubtless I would ascend higher than I have ever done, and my prayer would be more worthy of the Deity. But do not forget, dear child, that up to this day my opinions have been an abomination in the eyes of those who surrounded me, and that those whom they failed to shock, would have turned them into ridicule. This is why I have hidden, as a secret between God, poor Zdenko, and myself, the humble gift which I possess. My father likes music, and would have this instrument, which is sacred to me as the cymbals of the Eleusinian mysteries, conduce to his amusement. What would become of me if they were to ask me to accompany a cavatina for Amelia? and what would be my father's feelings

if I were to play one of those old Hussite airs which have sent so many Bohemians into the mines or to the scaffold? or a more modern hymn of our Lutheran ancestors, from whom he blushes to have descended? Alas! Consuelo, I know nothing more modern. There are, no doubt, admirable things of a later date. From what you tell me of Handel and the other great masters from whose works you have been instructed, their music would seem to me superior in many respects to that which I am about to teach you. But to know and learn this music, it would be necessary to put myself in relation with another musical world, and it is with you alone that I can resolve to do so—with you alone I can seek the despised or neglected treasures which you are about to bestow on me in overflowing measure."

"And I," said Consuelo, smiling, "think I shall not undertake the charge of this education. What I heard in the grotto was so beautiful, so grand, so incomparable, that I should fear in doing so, only to muddy a spring of crystal. Oh! Albert, I see plainly that you know more of music than I do. And now what will you say to the profane music of which I am forced to be a professor? I fear to discover in this case, as in the other, that I have hitherto been beneath my mission, and guilty of equal ignorance and frivolity."

"Far from thinking so, Consuelo, I look upon your profession as sacred; and as it is the loftiest which a woman can embrace, so is your soul the most worthy to fill such an office."

"Stay!—stay!—dear count," replied Consuelo, smiling. "From my often speaking to you of the convent where I learned music, and the church where I sung the praises of God, you conclude that I was destined to the service of the altar, or the modest teachings of the cloister. But if I should inform you that the zingarella, faithful to her origin, was from infancy the sport of circumstances, and that her education was at once a mixture of religious and profane, to which her will was equally inclined, careless whether it were in the monastery or the theatre—?"

"Certain that God has placed his seal on your forehead and devoted you to holiness from your mother's womb, I should not trouble myself about these things, but retain the conviction that you would be as pure in the theatre as in the cloister."

"What! would not your strict ideas of morality be shocked at being brought in contact with an actress?"

"In the dawn of religion," said he, "the theatre and the temple were one and the same sanctuary. In the purity of their primitive ideas, religious worship took the form of popular shows. The arts have their birth at the foot of the altar: the dance itself, that art now consecrated to ideas of impure voluptuousness, was the music of the senses in the festivals of the gods. Music and poetry were the highest expressions of

faith, and a woman endowed with genius and beauty was at once a sibyl and priestess. To these severely grand forms of the past, absurd and culpable distinctions succeeded. Religion proscribed beauty from its festivals, and woman from its solemnities. Instead of ennobling and directing love, it banished and condemned it. Beauty, woman, love, cannot lose their empire. Men have raised for themselves other temples which they call theatres, and where no other god presides. Is it your fault, Consuelo, if they have become dens of corruption? Nature, who perfects her prodigies without troubling herself as to how men may receive them, has formed you to shine among your sex, and to shed over the world the treasures of your power and genius. The cloister and the tomb are synonymous: you cannot, without morally committing suicide, bury the gifts of providence. You were obliged to wing your flight to a freer atmosphere. Energy is the condition of certain natures; an irresistible impulse impels them; and the decrees of the Deity in this respect are so decided, that he takes away the faculties which he has bestowed, so soon as they are neglected. The artist perishes and becomes extinct in obscurity, just as the thinker wanders and pines in solitude, and just as all human intellect is deteriorated, and weakened, and enervated, by inaction and isolation. Repair to the theatre, Consuelo, if you please, and submit with resignation to the apparent degradation, as the representative for the moment of a soul destined to suffer, of a lofty mind which vainly seeks for sympathy in the world around us, but which is forced to abjure a melancholy that is not the element of its life, and out of which the breath of the Holy Spirit imperiously expels it."

Albert continued to speak in this strain for a considerable time with great animation, hurrying Consuelo on to the recesses of his retreat. He had little difficulty in communicating to her his own enthusiasm for art, or in making her forget her first feeling of repugnance to re-enter the grotto. When she saw that he anxiously desired it, she began to entertain a wish for this interview, in order to become better acquainted with the ideas which this ardent yet timid man dared to express before her so boldly. These ideas were new to Consuelo, and perhaps they were entirely so in the mouth of a person of noble rank of that time and country. They only struck her, however, as the bold and frank expression of sentiments which she herself had frequently experienced in all their force. Devout, and an actress, she every day heard the canoness and the chaplain unceasingly condemn her brethren of the stage. In seeing herself restored to her proper sphere by a serious and reflecting man, she felt her heart throb and her bosom swell with exultation, as if she had been carried up into a more elevated and more congenial life. Her eyes were moistened with tears and her cheeks glowed with a pure and holy emotion, when at the end of an avenue she perceived the canoness, who was seeking her.

"Ah! dear priestess," said Albert, pressing her arm against his breast, "will you not come to pray in my church?"

"Yes, certainly I shall go," she replied.

"And when?"

"Whenever you wish. Do you think I am able yet to undertake this new exploit?"

"Yes; because we shall go to the Schreckenstein in broad daylight and by a less dangerous route than the well. Do you feel sufficient courage to rise before the dawn and to escape through the gates as soon as they are opened? I shall be in this underwood which you see at the side of the hill there, by the stone cross, and shall serve as your guide."

"Very well, I promise," replied Consuelo, not without a slight palpitation of heart.

"It appears rather cool this evening for so long a walk—does it not?" asked the canoness, accosting them in her calm yet searching manner.

Albert made no reply. He could not dissemble. Consuelo, who did not experience equal emotion, passed her other arm within that of the canoness, and kissed her neck. Wenceslawa vainly pretended indifference, but in spite of herself she submitted to the ascendancy of this devout and affectionate spirit. She sighed, and on entering the castle proceeded to put up a prayer for her conversion.

CHAPTER LIII.

Many days passed away however without Albert's wish being accomplished. It was in vain that Consuelo rose before the dawn and passed the drawbridge; she always found his aunt or the chaplain wandering on the esplanade, and from thence reconnoitring all the open country which she must traverse in order to gain the copsewood on the hill. She determined to walk alone within range of their observation, and give up the project of joining Albert, who, from his green and wooded retreat, recognised the enemy on the look-out, took a long walk in the forest glades, and re-entered the castle without being perceived.

"You have had an opportunity of enjoying an early walk, Signora Porporina," said the canoness at breakfast. "Were you not afraid that the dampness of the morning might be injurious to your health?"

"It was I, aunt, who advised the signora to breathe the freshness of the morning air; and I think these walks will be very useful to her."

"I should have thought that, for a person who devotes herself to the cultivation of the voice," said the canoness, with a little affectation, "our mornings are somewhat foggy. But if it is under your directions——"

"Have confidence in Albert," interrupted Count Christian;

"he has proved himself as good a physician as he is a good son and a faithful friend."

The dissimulation to which Consuelo was forced to yield with blushes, was very painful to her. She complained gently to Albert when she had an opportunity of speaking to him in private, and begged him to renounce his project, at least until his aunt's vigilance should be foiled. Albert consented, but entreated her to continue her walks in the environs of the park, so that he might join her whenever an opportunity presented itself.

Consuelo would gladly have been excused, although she liked walking, and felt how necessary to her convalescence it was, to enjoy exercise for some time every day, free from the restraint of this enclosure of walls and moats, where her thoughts were stifled as if she had been a prisoner; yet it gave her pain thus to practise deception towards those whom she respected, and from whom she received hospitality. Love, however, removes many obstacles, but friendship reflects, and Consuelo reflected much. They were now enjoying the last fine days of summer; for several months had already passed since Consuelo had come to dwell in the Castle of the Giants. What a summer for Consuelo! The palest autumn of Italy was more light, and rich, and genial. But this warm, moist air, this sky, often veiled by white and fleecy clouds, had also their charm and their peculiar beauty. She found an attraction in these solitary walks, which increased perhaps her disinclination to revisit the cavern. In spite of the resolution she had formed, she felt that Albert would have taken a load from her bosom in giving her back her promise; and when she found herself no longer under the spell of his supplicating looks and enthusiastic words, she secretly blessed his good aunt, who prevented her fulfilling her engagement by the obstacles she every day placed in the way.

One morning, as she wandered along the bank of the mountain streamlet, she observed Albert leaning on the balustrade of the parterre, far above her. Notwithstanding the distance which separated them, she felt as if incessantly under the disturbed and passionate gaze of this man, by whom she suffered herself in so great a degree to be governed. "My situation here is somewhat strange!" she exclaimed; "while this persevering friend observes me to see that I am faithful to the promise I have made, without doubt I am watched from some other part of the castle, to see that I maintain no relations with him that their customs and ideas of propriety would proscribe. I do not know what is passing in their minds. The Baroness Amelia does not return. The canoness appears to grow cold towards me, and to distrust me. Count Christian redoubles his attentions, and expresses his dread of the arrival of Porpora, which will probably be the signal for my departure. Albert appears to have forgotten that I forbade him to hope. As if

he had a right to expect everything from me, he asks nothing, and does not abjure a passion which seems, notwithstanding my inability to return it, to render him happy. In the mean time, here I am, as if I were engaged in attending every morning at an appointed place of meeting, to which I wish he may not come, exposing myself to the blame—nay, for aught I know, perhaps to the scorn—of a family who cannot understand either my friendship for him nor my position towards him; since indeed I do not comprehend them myself nor foresee their result. What a strange destiny is mine! Shall I then be condemned for ever to devote myself to others, without being loved in return, or without being able to love those whom I esteem?"

In the midst of these reflections a profound melancholy seized her. She felt the necessity of belonging to herself—that sovereign and legitimate want, the necessary condition of progress and development of the true artist. The watchful care which she had promised to observe towards Count Albert, weighed upon her as an iron chain. The bitter recollections of Anzoleto and of Venice clung to her, in the inaction and solitude of a life too monotonous and regular for her powerful organization.

She stopped near the rock which Albert had often shown her as being the place where he had first seen her, an infant, tied with thongs on her mother's shoulders like the pedlar's pack, and running over mountains and valleys, like the grasshopper of the fable, heedless of the morrow, and without a thought of advancing old age and inexorable poverty. "O, my poor mother!" thought the young zingarella, "here am I, brought back by my incomprehensible fate to a spot which you once traversed only to retain a vague recollection of it and the pledge of a touching kindness. You were then young and handsome, and doubtless could have met many a place where love and hospitality would have awaited you—society which would have absolved and transformed you, and in the bosom of which your painful and wandering life would have at last tasted comfort and repose. But you felt, and always said, that this comfort, this repose, were mortal weariness to the artist's soul. You were right—I feel it; for behold me in this castle, where, as elsewhere, you would pause but one night. Here I am, with every comfort around me, pampered, caressed, and with a powerful lord at my feet; and nevertheless, I am weary, weary, and suffocated with restraint."

Consuelo, overpowered with an extraordinary emotion, seated herself on the rock. She looked at the sandy path, as if she thought to find there the prints of her mother's naked feet. The sheep in passing had left some locks of their fleece upon the thorns. This fleece, of a reddish brown, recalled the russet hue of her mother's coarse mantle—that mantle which had so long protected her against sun and cold, against dust and rain. She had seen it fall from her shoulders piece by piece. "And we, too," she said, "were wandering sheep; we, too, left fragments of our apparel on the wayside thorn, but we

always bore along with us the proud love and the full enjoyment of our dear liberty."

While musing thus, Consuelo fixed her eyes upon the path of yellow sand which wound gracefully over the hill, and which, widening as it reached the valley, disappeared towards the north among the green pine-trees and the dark heath. "What is more beautiful than a road?" she thought. "It is the symbol and image of a life of activity and variety. What pleasing ideas are connected in my mind with the capricious turns of this! I do not recollect the country through which it winds, and yet I have formerly passed through it. But it should indeed be beautiful, were it only as a contrast to yonder dark castle, which sleeps eternally on its immoveable rocks. How much pleasanter to the eye are these gravelled paths, with their glowing hues, and the golden broom which shadow them, than the straight alleys and stiff paling of the proud domain? With merely looking at the formal lines of a garden, I feel wearied and overcome. Why should my feet seek to reach that which my eyes and thoughts can at once embrace, while the free road, which turns aside and is half hidden in the woods, invites me to follow its windings and penetrate its mysteries? And then it is the path for all human kind—it is the highway of the world. It belongs to no master, to close and open it at pleasure. It is not only the powerful and rich that are entitled to tread its flowery margins and to breathe its rich perfume. Every bird may build its nest amid its branches; every wanderer may repose his head upon its stones—nor wall nor paling shuts out his horizon. Heaven does not close before him; so far as his eye can reach, the highway is a land of liberty. To the right, to the left, woods, fields—all have masters; but the road belongs to him to whom nothing else belongs, and how fondly therefore does he love it! The meanest beggar prefers it to asylums, which, were they rich as palaces, would be but prisons to him. His dream, his passion, his hope, will ever be the highway. O, my mother, you knew it well, and often told me so! Why can I not reanimate your ashes which repose far from me, beneath the seaweed of the lagunes? Why canst thou not carry me on thy strong shoulders, and bear me far, far away, where the swallow skims onward to the blue and distant hills, and where the memory of the past and the longing after vanished happiness, cannot follow the light-footed artist, who travels still faster than they do, and each day places a new horizon, a second world, between her and the enemies of liberty? My poor mother, why canst thou not still by turns cherish and oppress me, and lavish alternate kisses and blows, like the wind which sometimes caresses and sometimes lays prostrate the young corn upon the fields, to raise and cast it down again according to its fantasy? Thou hadst a firmer soul than mine, and thou wouldst have torn me, either willingly or by force, from the bonds which daily entangle me!"

In the midst of this entrancing yet mournful reverie, Con-

suelo was struck by the tones of a voice that made her start as if a red-hot iron had been placed upon her heart. It was that of a man from the ravine below, humming in the Venetian dialect the song of the "*Echo*," one of the most original compositions of Chiozzetto.* The person who sung did not exert the full power of his voice, and his breathing seemed affected by walking. He warbled a few notes now and then, stopping from time to time to converse with another person, just as if he had wished to dissipate the weariness of his journey. He then resumed his song as before, as if by way of exercise, interrupted it again to speak to his companion, and in this manner approached the spot where Consuelo sat, motionless, and as if about to faint. She could not hear the conversation which took place, as the distance was too great; nor could she see the travellers in consequence of an intervening projection of the rock. But could she be for an instant deceived in that voice, in those accents, which she knew so well, and the fragments of that song which she herself had taught, and so often made her graceless pupil repeat?

At length the two invisible travellers drew near, and she heard one whose voice was unknown to her say to the other, in bad Italian, and with the patois of the country, "Ah, Signor, do not go up there—the horses could not follow you, and you would lose sight of me; keep by the banks of the stream. See, the road lies before us, and the way you are taking is only a path for foot passengers."

The voice which Consuelo knew became more distant, and appeared to descend, and soon she heard him ask what fine castle that was on the other side.

"That is Riesenburg, which means the Castle of the Giants;" replied the guide, for he was one by profession, and Consuelo could now distinguish him at the bottom of the hill, on foot and leading two horses covered with sweat. The bad state of the roads, recently inundated by the torrent, had obliged the riders to dismount. The traveller followed at a little distance, and Consuelo could at length see him by leaning over the rock which protected her. His back was towards her, and he wore a travelling-dress, which so altered his appearance and even his walk, that had she not heard his voice she could not have recognised him. He stopped, however, to look at the castle, and taking off his broad-leafed hat, wiped his face with his handkerchief. Although only able to distinguish him imperfectly from the great height at which she was placed, she knew at once those golden and flowing locks, and recognised the movement he was accustomed to make in raising them from his forehead or neck when he was warm.

"This seems a very fine castle," said he. "If I had time I should like to ask the giants for some breakfast."

"Oh, do not attempt it," said the guide, shaking his head. "The Rudolstadts only receive beggars and relations."

* Jean Croce de Chioggia, sixteenth century.

"Are they not more hospitable than that? May the devil seize them then!"

"Listen—it is because they have something to conceal."

"A treasure or a crime?"

"Oh, nothing of that kind; it is their son, who is mad."

"Deuce take him too, then; it would do them a service."

The guide began to laugh; Anzoleto commenced to sing.

"Come," said the guide, "we are now over the worst of the road; if you wish to mount we may gallop as far as Tusta. The road is magnificent—nothing but sand. Once there, you will find the highway to Prague, and excellent post-horses."

"In that case," said Anzoleto, adjusting his stirrups, "I may say the fiend seize thee too! for your jades, your mountain roads, and yourself, are all becoming very tiresome."

Thus speaking, he slowly mounted his nag, sunk the spurs in its side, and without troubling himself about the guide, who followed him with great difficulty, he darted off towards the north, raising great clouds of dust on that road which Consuelo had so long contemplated, and on which she had so little expected to see pass, like a fatal vision, the enemy of her life, the constant torture of her heart. She followed him with her eyes, in a state of stupor impossible to express. Struck with disgust and fear, so long as she was within hearing of his voice, she had remained hidden and trembling. But when he disappeared, when she thought she had lost sight of him perhaps for ever, she experienced only violent despair. She threw herself over the rock to see him for a longer time; the undying love which she cherished for him awoke again with fervour, and she would have recalled him, but her voice died on her lips. The hand of death seemed to press heavily on her bosom; her eyes grew dim; a dull noise, like the dashing of the sea, murmured in her ears; and falling exhausted at the foot of the rock, she found herself in the arms of Albert, who had approached without being perceived, and who bore her, apparently dying, to a more shady and secluded part of the mountain.

CHAPTER LIV.

The fear of betraying by her emotion a secret so long hidden in the depths of her soul, restored Consuelo to strength, and enabled her to control herself, so that Albert perceived nothing extraordinary in her situation. Just as the young count received her in his arms, pale and ready to swoon Anzoleto and his guide disappeared among the distant pine-trees, and Albert might therefore attribute to his own presence the danger she had incurred of falling down the precipice. The idea of this danger, of which he supposed himself to be the cause in terrifying her by his sudden approach, so distressed him, that he did not at first perceive Consuelo's confused replies. Consuelo, in whom he still inspired at times a kind of superstitious terror, feared that he might divine the mystery,

But Albert, since love had made him live the life of other men, seemed to have lost the apparently supernatural faculties which he had formerly possessed. She soon conquered her agitation, and Albert's proposal to conduct her to his hermitage did not displease her at this moment as it would have done a few hours previously. It seemed as if the grave and serious character and gloomy abode of this man who regarded her with such devoted affection, offered themselves as a refuge in which she could find strength to combat the memory of her unhappy passion. "It is Providence," thought she, "who has sent me this friend in the midst of my trials, and the dark sanctuary to which he would lead me, is an emblem of the tomb in which I should wish to be buried, rather than pursue the track of the evil genius who has just passed me. Oh! yes, my God, rather than follow his footsteps, let the earth open to receive me, and snatch me for ever from the living world!"

"Dear Consolation," said Albert, "I came to tell you that my aunt, having to examine her accounts this morning, is not thinking of us, and we are at length at liberty to accomplish our pilgrimage. Nevertheless, if you still feel any repugnance to revisit places which recal so much suffering and terror——"

"No, my friend," replied Consuelo; "on the contrary, I have never felt better disposed to worship with you, and to soar aloft together on the wings of that sacred song which you promised to let me hear."

They took the way together towards the Schreckenstein, and as they buried themselves in the wood in an opposite direction to that taken by Anzoleto, Consuelo felt more at ease, as if each step tended to undo the charm of which she had felt the force. She walked on so eagerly, that although grave and reserved, Count Albert might have ascribed her anxiety to a desire to please, if he had not felt that distrust of himself and of his destiny, which formed the principal feature of his character.

He conducted her to the foot of the Schreckenstein, and stopped at the entrance of a grotto filled with stagnant water, and nearly hidden by the luxuriant vegetation. "This grotto, in which you may remark some traces of a vaulted construction," said he, "is called in the country 'The Monk's Cave.' Some think it was a cellar of a convent, at a period when, in place of these ruins, there stood here a fortified town; others relate that it was subsequently the retreat of a repentant criminal, who turned hermit. However this may be, no one dares to penetrate the recesses; and every one says that the water is deep, and is imbued with a mortal poison, owing to the veins of copper through which it runs in its passage. But this water is really neither deep nor dangerous; it sleeps upon a bed of rocks, and we can easily cross it, Consuelo, if you will once again confide in the strength of my arm and the purity of my love."

Thus saying, after having satisfied himself that no one had

followed or observed them, he took her in his arms, and entering the water, which reached almost to his knee, he cleared a passage through the shrubs and matted ivy which concealed the bottom of the grotto. In a very short time he set her down upon a bank of fine dry sand, in a place completely dark. He immediately lighted the lantern with which he was furnished, and after some turns in subterranean galleries similar to those which Consuelo had already traversed, they found themselves at the door of a cell, opposite to that which she had opened the first time.

"This subterranean building," said he, "was originally destined to serve as a refuge in time of war, either for the principal inhabitants of the town which covered the hill, or for the lords of the Castle of the Giants, to whom this town belonged, who could enter it secretly by the passages with which you are already acquainted. If a hermit, as they assert, since inhabited the monk's cave, it is probable that he was aware of this retreat; because the gallery which we have just traversed, has been recently cleared out, whilst I have found those leading from the castle, so filled up in many places with earth and gravel that I found difficulty in removing them. Besides, the relics I discovered here, the remnants of matting, the pitcher, the crucifix, the lamp, and above all the skeleton of a man lying on his back, his hands crossed on his breast, as if in a last prayer at the hour of his final sleep, proved to me that a hermit had here piously and peaceably ended his mysterious existence. Our peasants still believe that the hermit's spirit inhabits the depths of the mountain. They affirm that they have often seen him wander around it, or flit to the heights by the light of the moon; that they have heard him pray, sigh, sob, and that even a strange incomprehensible music has been wafted towards them, like a suppressed sigh, on the wings of the breeze. Even I myself, Consuelo, when despair peopled nature around me with phantoms and prodigies, have thought I saw the gloomy penitent prostrate under the Hussite. I have fancied that I heard his plaintive sobs and heart-rending sighs ascend from the depths of the abyss. But since I discovered and inhabited this cell, I have never seen any hermit but myself—any spectre but my own figure—nor have I heard any sobs save those which issued from my own breast."

Since Consuelo's first interview with Albert in the cavern, she had never heard him utter an irrational word. She did not venture, therefore, to allude to the manner in which he had addressed herself, nor to the illusions in the midst of which she had surprised him. But she was astonished to observe that they seemed absolutely forgotten, and not wishing to recal them, she merely asked if solitude had really delivered him from the disquietude of which he spoke.

"I cannot tell you precisely," he replied; "and, at least not until you exact it, can I urge my memory to the task. I must have been mad, and the efforts I made to conceal it, betrayed it

yet more. When, thanks to one to whom tradition had handed down the secret of these caverns, I succeeded in escaping from the solicitude of my relatives and hiding my despair, my existence changed. I recovered a sort of empire over myself, and, secure of concealment from troublesome witnesses, I was able at length to appear tranquil and resigned in the bosom of my family."

Consuelo perceived that poor Albert was under an illusion in some respects, but this was not the time to enlighten him; and, pleased to hear him speak of the past with such unconcern, she began to examine the cell with more attention than she had bestowed on it the first time. There was no appearance of the care and neatness which she formerly observed. The dampness of the walls, the cold of the atmosphere, and the mouldiness of the books, betrayed complete abandonment. "You see that I have kept my word," said Albert, who had just succeeded with great difficulty in lighting the stove. "I have never set foot here since the day you displayed your power over me by tearing me away."

Consuelo had a question on her lips, but restrained herself. She was about to ask if Zdenko, the friend, the faithful servant, the zealous guardian, had also abandoned and neglected the hermitage. But she recollected the profound sorrow which Albert always displayed when she hazarded a question as to what had become of him, and why she had never seen him since the terrible encounter in the cavern? Albert had always evaded these questions, either by pretending not to understand her, or by begging her to fear nothing for the *innocent*. She was at first persuaded that Zdenko had received and faithfully fulfilled the command of his master never to appear before his eyes. But when she resumed her solitary walks, Albert, in order to completely reassure her, had sworn, while a deadly paleness overspread his countenance, that she should not encounter Zdenko, who had set out on a long voyage. In fact no one had seen him since that time, and they thought he was dead in some corner, or that he had quitted the country.

Consuelo believed neither of these suppositions. She knew too well the passionate attachment of Zdenko to Albert to think a separation possible. As to his death, she thought of it with a terror she hardly admitted to herself, when she recollected Albert's dreadful oath to sacrifice the life of this unhappy being if necessary to the repose of her he loved. But she rejected this frightful suspicion on recalling the mildness and humanity which the whole of Albert's life displayed. Besides he had enjoyed perfect tranquillity for many months, and no apparent demonstration on the part of Zdenko had reawakened the fury which the young count had for a moment manifested. He had forgotten that unhappy moment which Consuelo also struggled to forget; he only remembered what took place in the cavern whilst he was in possession of his reason. Consuelo therefore concluded that he had forbidden

Zdenko to enter or approach the castle, and that the poor fellow, through grief or anger, had condemned himself to voluntary seclusion in the hermitage. She took it for granted that Zdenko would come out on the Schreckenstein only by night for air, and to converse with Albert, who no doubt took care of, and watched over him who had for so long a time taken care of himself. On seeing the condition of the cell, Consuelo was driven to the conclusion that he was angry at his master, and had displayed it by neglecting his retreat. But as Albert had assured her when they entered the grotto, that there was contained in it no cause of alarm, she seized the opportunity when his attention was otherwise engaged, to open the rusty gate of what he called his church, and in this way to reach Zdenko's cell, where doubtless she would find traces of his recent presence. The door yielded as soon as she had turned the key, but the darkness was so great that she could see nothing. She waited till Albert had passed into the mysterious oratory which he had promised to show her, and which he was preparing for her reception, and she then took a light and returned cautiously to Zdenko's chamber, not without trembling at the idea of finding him there in person. But there was not the faintest evidence of his existence. The bed of leaves and the sheepskins had been removed. The seat, the tools, the sandals of undressed hide—all had disappeared, and one would have said, to look at the dripping walls, that this vault had never sheltered a living being.

A feeling of sadness and terror took possession of her at this discovery. A mystery shrouded the fate of this unfortunate, and Consuelo accused herself of being perhaps the cause of a deplorable event. There were two natures in Albert: the one wise, the other mad; the one polished, tender, merciful; the other strange, untamed, perhaps violent and implacable. His fancied identity with the fanatic John Ziska, his love for the recollections of Hussite Bohemia, and that mute and patient, but at the same time profound passion which he nourished for herself—all occurred at this moment to her mind, and seemed to confirm her most painful suspicions. Motionless and frozen with horror, she hardly ventured to glance at the cold and naked floor of the grotto, dreading to find on it tracks of blood.

She was still plunged in these reflections, when she heard Albert tune his violin, and soon she heard him playing on the admirable instrument the ancient psalm which she so much wished to hear a second time. The music was so original, and Albert performed it with such sweet expression, that, forgetting her distress, and attracted and as if charmed by a magnetic power, she gently approached the spot where he stood.

CHAPTER LV.

The door of the church was open, and Consuelo stopped upon the threshold to observe the inspired virtuoso and the strange sanctuary. This so-called church was nothing but an immense grotto, hewn, or rather cleft out of the rock irregularly by the hand of nature, and hollowed out by the subterranean force of the water. Scattered torches, placed on gigantic blocks, shed a fantastic light on the green sides of the cavern, and partially revealed dark recesses in the depths of which the huge forms of tall stalactites loomed like spectres alternately seeking and shunning the light. The enormous sedimentary deposits on the sides of the cavern assumed a thousand fantastic forms. Sometimes they seemed devouring serpents, rolling over and interlacing each other. Sometimes hanging from the roof and shooting upwards from the floor, they wore the aspect of the colossal teeth of some monster, of which the dark cave beyond might pass for the gaping jaws. Elsewhere they might have been taken for mis-shapen statues, giant images of the demi-gods of antiquity. A vegetation appropriate to the grotto—huge lichens, rough as dragon's scales; festoons of heavy-leaved scolopendra, tufts of young cypresses recently planted in the middle of the enclosure on little heaps of artificial soil, not unlike graves—gave the place a terrific and sombre aspect which deeply impressed Consuelo. To her first feeling of terror, admiration however quickly succeeded. She approached and saw Albert standing on the margin of the fountain which sprung up in the midst of the cavern. This water, although gushing up abundantly, was enclosed in so deep a basin that no movement was visible on its surface. It was calm and motionless as a block of dark sapphire, and the beautiful aquatic plants with which Albert and Zdenko had clothed its margin, were not agitated by the slightest motion. The spring was warm at its source, and the tepid exhalations with which it filled the cavern, caused a mild and moist atmosphere favourable to vegetation. It gushed from its fountain in many ramifications, of which some lost themselves under the rocks with a dull noise, while others ran gently into limpid streams in the interior of the grotto and disappeared in the depths beyond.

When Count Albert, who until then had been only trying the strings of his violin, saw Consuelo advance towards him, he came forward to meet her, and assisted her to cross the channels, over which he had thrown, in the deepest spots, some trunks of trees, while in other places rocks on a level with the water, offered an easy passage to those habituated to it. He offered his hand to assist her, and sometimes lifted her in his arms. But this time Consuelo was afraid, not of the torrent which flowed silently and darkly under her feet, but of the mysterious guide towards whom she was drawn by an irresistible sympathy, while an indefina-

ble repulsion at the same time held her back. Having reached the bank she beheld a spectacle not much calculated to reassure her. It was a sort of quadrangular monument, formed of bones and human skulls, arranged as if in a catacomb.

"Do not be uneasy," said Albert, who felt her shudder. "These are the honoured remains of the martyrs of my religion, and they form the altar before which I love to meditate and pray."

"What is your religion then, Albert?" said Consuelo, in a sweet and melancholy voice. "Are these bones Hussite or Catholic? Were not both the victims of impious fury, and martyrs of a faith equally sincere? Is it true that you prefer the Hussite doctrines to those of your relatives, and that the reforms subsequent to those of John Huss, do not appear to you sufficiently radical and decisive? Speak, Albert—what am I to believe?"

"If they told you that I preferred the reform of the Hussites to that of the Lutherans, and the great Procopius to the vindictive Calvin, as much as I prefer the exploits of the Taborites to those of the soldiers of Wallenstein, they have told you the truth, Consuelo. But what signifies my creed to you, who seem instinctively aware of truth, and who know the Deity better than I do? God forbid that I should bring you here to trouble your pure soul and peaceful conscience with my tormenting reveries! Remain as you are, Consuelo; you were born pious and good; moreover, you were born poor and obscure, and nothing has changed in you the pure dictates of reason and the light of justice. We can pray together without disputing—you who know everything although having learned nothing, and I who know very little after a long and tedious study. In whatever temple you raise your voice, the knowledge of the true God will be in your heart, and the feeling of the true faith will kindle your soul. It is not to instruct you, but in order that your revelation may be imparted to me, that I wished our voices and our spirits to unite before this altar, formed of the bones of my fathers."

"I was not mistaken, then, in thinking that these honoured remains, as you call them, are those of Hussites, thrown into the fountain of the Schreckenstein during the bloody fury of the civil wars, in the time of your ancestor John Ziska, who, they say, made fearful reprisals? I have been told that, after burning the village, he destroyed the wells. I fancy I can discover in the obscurity of this vault, a circle of hewed stones above my head, which tells me that we are precisely under a spot where I have often sat when fatigued after searching for you in vain. Say, Count Albert, is this really the place that you have baptized as the Stone of Expiation?"

"Yes, it is here," replied Albert, "that torments and atrocious violence have consecrated the asylum of my prayers, and the sanctuary of my grief. You see enormous blocks suspended above our heads, and others scattered on the banks of the

stream. The just hands of the Taborites flung them there by the orders of him whom they called the Terrible Blind Man; but they only served to force back the waters towards those subterranean beds in which they succeeded in forcing a passage. The wells were destroyed, and I have covered their ruins with cypress, but it would have needed a mountain to fill this cavern. The blocks which were heaped up in the mouth of the well, were stopped by a winding stair, similar to that which you had the courage to descend in my garden at the castle. Since that time, the gradual pressure of the soil has thrust them closer together, and confines them better. If any portion of the mass escapes, it is during the winter frosts; you have therefore nothing to fear from their fall."

"It was not that of which I was thinking, Albert," replied Consuelo, looking towards the gloomy altar on which he had placed his Stradivarius. "I asked myself why you render exclusive worship to the memory of these victims, as if there were no martyrs on the other side, and as if the crimes of the one were more pardonable than those of the other?"

Consuelo spoke thus in a severe tone, and looking distrustfully at Albert. She remembered Zdenko, and all her questions, had she dared so to utter them, assumed in her mind a tone of interrogation, such as would befit a judge towards a criminal.

The painful emotion which suddenly seized upon the count seemed the confession of remorse. He passed his hands over his forehead, then pressed them against his breast, as if it were being torn asunder. His countenance changed in a frightful manner, and Consuelo feared that he might have only too well understood her.

"You do not know what harm you do me," said he, leaning upon the heap of bones, and drooping his head towards the withered skulls, which seemed to gaze on him from their hollow orbits. "No, you cannot know it, Consuelo, and your cold remarks recall the memory of the dreary past. You do not know that you speak to a man who has lived through ages of grief, and who, after being the blind instrument of inflexible justice in the hands of God, has received his recompense and undergone his punishment. I have so suffered, so wept, so expiated my dreary destiny, so atoned for the horrors to which my fate subjected me, that I had at last flattered myself I could forget them. Forgetfulness!—yes, forgetfulness!—that was the craving which consumed my aching breast; that was my vow and my daily prayer; that was the token of my alliance with man and my reconciliation with God, which, during long years, I had implored, prostrate upon these mouldering bones. When I first saw you, Consuelo, I began to hope; when you pitied me, I thought I was saved. See this wreath of withered flowers ready to fall into the dust, and which encircles the skull that surmounts the altar. You do not recognise it, though I have watered it with many a bitter

yet soothing tear. It is you who gathered them, you who sent them to me by the companion of my sorrows, the faithful guardian of this sepulchre. Covering them with kisses and tears, I anxiously asked myself if you could ever feel any true and heartfelt regard for one like myself—a pitiless fanatic, an unfeeling tyrant——"

"But what are the crimes you have committed?" said Consuelo firmly, distracted with a thousand varying emotions, and emboldened by the deep dejection of Albert. "If you have a confession to make, make it here to me, that I may know if I can absolve and love you."

"Yes, you may absolve me; for he whom you know, Albert of Rudolstadt, has been innocent as a child; but he whom you do not know, John Ziska of the Chalice, has been whirled by the wrath of Heaven into a career of iniquity."

Consuelo saw the imprudence of which she had been guilty, in rousing the slumbering flame and recalling to Albert's mind his former madness. This, however, was not the moment to combat it, and she was revolving in her mind some expedient to calm him, and had gradually sunk into a reverie, when suddenly she perceived that Albert no longer spoke, no longer held her hand—that he was not at her side, but standing a few paces off, before the monument, performing on his violin the singular airs with which she had been already so surprised and charmed.

CHAPTER LVI.

ALBERT at first played several of those ancient canticles whose authors are now either unknown or forgotten in Bohemia, but of which Zdenko had preserved the precious tradition, and the text of which the count had found by dint of study and meditation. He was so imbued with the spirit of these compositions, barbarous at the first glance, but profoundly touching and truly beautiful to an enlightened and serious taste, and had made himself so familiar with them, as to be able to improvise on them at length, mingling with them his own ideas, then resuming and developing the original idea, and again giving way to his own inspiration, all without changing the original austere and striking character of these ancient productions by his ingenious and learned interpretation. Consuelo had determined to listen to and retain these precious specimens of the popular genius of ancient Bohemia; but all her endeavours soon became impossible, as much from her musing mood as the vague impression which the music itself produced.

There is a species of music which may be termed natural, because it is not the production of science and reflection, but rather of an inspiration which escapes from the trammels of rules and conventions. Such is popular music, that of the peasants in particular. What glorious poetry appears, lives,

and dies, as it were, among them, without ever having been correctly noted down, or appearing in any regular form! The unknown artist, who improvises his rustic ballad while he tends his flocks or drives the plough—and such exist even in the most prosaic countries—can rarely be induced to give a form to his fugitive ideas. He communicates it to others, children of nature like himself, and they chaunt it from hamlet to hamlet, from hut to hut, each one according to his taste. It is for this reason that these songs and pastoral romances, so lively and simple, or so tender in sentiment, are for the most part lost, and have never lasted more than one century. Educated musicians will not trouble themselves to collect them. The most part despise them, for want of an intelligence and sentiment sufficiently elevated to comprehend them; others are turned aside by the difficulties they encounter in their search for the true and real version, with which perhaps the author himself was unacquainted, and which certainly was not acknowledged as an invariable type by its numerous interpreters. Some have changed it through ignorance; others have developed, modified, or embellished it by their superior taste and intelligence, because cultivation has not taught them to repress their natural impulses. They do not know that they have transformed the primitive work, and their candid hearers are no more aware of it than themselves. The peasant neither examines nor compares. When Heaven has made him a musician, he sings after the fashion of the birds, the nightingale especially, whose improvisation is endless, though the elements of her song be the same. Moreover, the genius of the people is unbounded. It is needless to register its productions, which, like those of the earth they cultivate, are unceasing: it creates every hour, like Nature, which inspires it.*

Consuelo had all the candour, poetry, and sensibility in her composition which are requisite to comprehend and love popular music. In this she proved that she was a great artist, and that the learned theories which she had studied, had in no respect impaired the freshness and sweetness which are the treasures of inspiration and the youth of the soul. She had sometimes whispered to Anzoleto, so that Porpora could not hear, that she loved several of the barcaroles sung by the fishermen of the Adriatic, better than all the science of Padre Martini and Maestro Durante. Her mother's songs and boleros were a scource of poetic life from which she never wearied in drawing inspiration. What impression then must the musical genius of the Bohemians—that pastoral, warlike, fanatic people, grave and mild in the midst of the most potent elements of activity—have produced upon her! Such characteristics were at

* The author here enters, in a note, into some particulars relative to the hurdy-gurdy players in France. The principal instructors, it appears, are in Bourbonnais, in the woods. Their simple compositions, which they reckon by hundreds, and are yearly renewed, embrace only the simplest elements of music.

once striking and new to her. Albert performed this music with rare perception of the national spirit, and of the pious and energetic feelings in which it originated. He combined in his improvisation the profound melancholy and heart-rending regret with which slavery had imbued his soul and that of his people; and this mingling of sorrow and bravery, of exultation and depression, these hymns of gratitude united with cries of distress, pictured in the deepest and most lively colours the sorrows of Bohemia and of Albert.

It has been justly said, that the aim of music is to awaken feeling. No other art so reveals the sublime emotions of the human soul; no art so depicts the glories of Nature, the delights of contemplation, the character of nations, the whirl of passion, and the cry of suffering. Hope, fear, regret, despair, devotion, enthusiasm, faith, doubt, glory, peace—all these and more, music gives us, and takes away from us again, according to its genius and our own capacity. It presents things in an entirely new and original aspect, and without being guilty of the puerilities of mere sound, and the imitation of external noises, it suffers us to perceive, through a dreamy haze which enhances and ennobles them, the exterior objects to which it transports our imagination. Certain anthems will evoke the gigantic phantoms of ancient cathedrals, allow us to penetrate into the secret thoughts of their constructors, and of those who, kneeling within their holy precincts, utter their hymns of praise to God. Those who are able to express simply and powerfully the music of different nations, and know how to listen to it as it deserves, need not to make a tour of the world in order to behold different nations, to visit their monuments, to read their books, or to traverse their plains, their mountains, their gardens, and their wildernesses. A Jewish air at once transports us into the synagogue; a pibroch conveys us to the Highlands of Scotland; while all Spain is revealed to us by a melody of that fair land. Thus have I been many a time in Poland, Germany, Naples, Ireland, India; and thus have I come to be better acquainted with the inhabitants of these countries than if I had known them for years. It required but an instant to transport me there and make me a sharer in all their thoughts and emotions. I identified myself with every phase of their existence by studying their music and making it my own.

Consuelo gradually ceased to hear Albert's violin. Her soul was rapt, and her senses, closed against all outward objects, awoke in another world, to traverse unknown regions inhabited by a new race of beings. She beheld, amidst a strange chaos at once horrible and magnificent, the spectral forms of the heroes of old Bohemia; she heard the mournful clang of convent bells, while the formidable Taborites descended from their fortified mounts, lean, half-clad, bloody, and ferocious. Then she beheld the angels of death assembled in the clouds, the cup and sword in their hands. Hovering in a compact troop

over the heads of the prevaricating pontiffs, she saw them pour out upon the accursed earth the vial of divine wrath. She fancied she heard the rushing of their wings, and the dropping blood which extinguished the conflagration lighted by their fury. Sometimes it was a night of terror and gloom, wherein she heard the sobs and groans of the dying on the field of battle. Sometimes it was a glowing day, of which she could hardly bear the splendour, in which she saw the thundering chariot of the terrible blind man, with his helmet and his rusty cuirass, and the gore-stained bandage which covered his eyes. Temples opened of themselves as he approached; monks fled into the bosom of the earth, carrying away their relics and their treasures in a corner of their robes. Then the conquerors brought feeble old men, mendicants covered with sores like Lazarus; madmen who ran singing and laughing like Zdenko; executioners stained with blood, little children with pure hands and angel looks, amazons carrying torches and bundles of pikes, and seated them round a table, while an angel radiant with beauty, like those which Albert Durer has introduced into his apocalyptic compositions, presented to their greedy lips the wooden cup, the chalice of forgiveness, of restoration, and of sacred equality. This angel re-appeared in all the visions that floated around Consuelo. She saw him, the beautiful one, the sorrowful, the immortal, proudest among the proud. He bore along with him his broken chains; and his torn pinions dragging on the ground betrayed tokens of violence and captivity. He smiled compassionately on the men of crime, and pressed the little children to his bosom.

Excited, fascinated, she darted towards him with open arms while her knees bent under her. Albert let fall his violin, which gave out a plaintive sound as it fell, and received the young girl in his arms while he uttered a cry of surprise and transport. It was he whom Consuelo had listened to and looked at, while dreaming of the rebellious angel—his form, his image which had attracted and subdued her—it was against his heart that she had come to rest her own, exclaiming in a choking voice—"Thine! thine! Angel of Grief, thine and God's for ever!"

But hardly had Albert's lips touched hers, than a deadly chill and scorching pain ran through limb and brain. The illusion so roughly dissipated, inflicted so violent a shock upon her system that she felt as if about to expire, and extricating herself from the arms of the count, she fell against the bones of the altar, which gave way with a frightful crash. Seeing herself covered with these dread remains, and in the arms of Albert, who gazed on her with surprise and alarm, she experienced such dreadful anguish and terror that, hiding her face in her dishevelled hair, she exclaimed with sobs: "Away!—away!—in the name of Heaven—light!—air! O God, rescue me from this sepulchre, and restore me to the light of the sun!"

Albert, seeing her pale and delirious, darted towards her, and would have lifted her in his arms to extricate her from the cavern. But in her consternation she understood him not, and, abruptly rising, she began to fly recklessly towards the recesses of the cavern, without giving any heed to the obstacles by which she was beset, and which in many places presented imminent dangers.

"In the name of God," said Albert, "not that way! Death is in your path! Wait for me!"

But his cries only served to augment Consuelo's terror. She bounded twice over the brook with the lightness of a roe, and without knowing what she did. At last, in a gloomy recess planted with cypress, she dashed against a sort of mound, and fell with her hands before her on earth freshly turned up.

This shock made such an impression upon her that a kind of stupor succeeded to her terror. Suffocated, breathless, and not well comprehending what she felt, she suffered the count to approach. He had hastened after her, and had had the presence of mind in passing to seize one of the torches from the rocks, in order to light her along the windings of the stream in case he should not overtake her before she reached a spot which he knew to be deep, and towards which she appeared to direct her course. The poor young man was so overwhelmed by such sudden and contrary emotions, that he dared not speak to her, nor even offer her his hand. She was seated on the heap of earth which had caused her to stumble, and dared not utter a word, but confused, and with downcast eyes, she gazed mechanically upon the ground. Suddenly she perceived that this mound had the form and appearance of a tomb, and that she was really seated on a recently made grave, over which were strewed branches of cypress and withered flowers. She rose hastily, and with fresh terror which she could not conquer, exclaimed, "Oh, Albert, whom have you buried here?"

"I buried here what was dearest to me in the world before I knew you," replied Albert, with the most painful emotion. "If I have committed an act of sacrilege during my delirium, and under the idea of fulfilling a sacred duty, God will, I trust, pardon me. I shall tell you another time what soul inhabited the body which rests here. At present you are too much agitated, and require the fresh air. Come, Consuelo, let us leave this place, where you made me in one moment the happiest and most miserable of men."

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed, "let us go hence. I know not what vapours are rising from the earth, but I feel as if I were about to die, and as if my reason were deserting me."

They left the cavern together without uttering another word. Albert went first, stopping and holding down his torch before each stone, so that his companion might see and shun it. When he was about to open the door of the cell, a recollection occurred to Consuelo, doubtless in consequence of her

artistic turn of thought, though otherwise seemingly out of place.

"Albert," said she, "you have forgotten your violin beside the spring. This admirable instrument, which caused me emotions hitherto unknown, I could not consent to abandon to certain destruction in this damp place."

Albert made a gesture indicating the little value he now attached to anything besides Consuelo. But she insisted. "It has caused me much pain," said she, "nevertheless——"

"If it has caused you only pain, let it be destroyed," said he, with bitterness. "I never wish to touch it again during my life. Oh! I have been too late in destroying it."

"It would be false were I to say so," replied Consuelo, whose respect for the musical genius of the count began to revive. "I was too much agitated, that is all, and my delight changed into anguish. Seek it, my friend; I should wish to put it in its case until I have courage to place it in your hands and listen to it again."

Consuelo was affected by the look of satisfaction which the count gave her as he re-entered the grotto in order to obey her. She remained alone for a few moments, and reproached herself for her foolish fears and suspicions. She remembered, trembling and blushing as she did so, the delirium which had cast her into his arms; but she could not avoid admiring the respect and forbearance of this man, who adored her, and yet who did not take advantage of the opportunity to speak of his love. His sad and languid demeanour plainly indicated that he hoped nothing either from the present or from the future. She acknowledged his delicacy, and determined to soften by sweetest words their mutual farewell on leaving the cavern.

But the remembrance of Zdenko was fated to pursue her like a vengeful shadow, and force her to accuse Albert in spite of herself. On approaching the door, her eyes lighted on an inscription in Bohemian which she could easily decipher, since she knew it by heart. Some hand, which could be no other than Zdenko's, had traced it with chalk on the dark deep door: "May he whom they have wronged——." The rest was unintelligible to Consuelo, but the alteration of the last word caused her great uneasiness. Albert returned, grasping his violin, but she had neither courage nor presence of mind to assist him as she had promised. She was impatient to quit the cavern. When he turned the key in the lock, she could not avoid placing her finger on the mysterious word, and looking interrogatively at her host.

"That means," said Albert, with an appearance of tranquillity, "may the unacknowledged angel, the friend of the unhappy——"

"Yes, I know that; and what more?"

"May he pardon thee!"

"And why pardon?" she replied, turning pale.

"If grief be pardonable," said the count, with a melancholy air, "I have a long prayer to make."

They entered the gallery, and did not break silence until they reached the Monk's Cave. But when the light of day shed its pale reflection through the foliage on the count's features, Consuelo observed the silent tears flow gently down his cheeks. She was affected, yet when he approached with a timid air to carry her to the entrance, she preferred wetting her feet rather than permit him to lift her in his arms. She alleged his fatigue and exhaustion as a pretext for refusing, and already her slippers were moistened, when Albert exclaimed, extinguishing his torch—

"Farewell, then, Consuelo! I see your aversion, and I must return to eternal night, like a spectre evoked for a moment from the tomb, only to inspire you with fear."

"No! your life belongs to me," exclaimed Consuelo, turning and stopping him; "you made an oath never to enter this cavern without me, and you have no right to withdraw it."

"And why do you wish to impose the burthen of life on a phantom? A recluse is but the shadow of a man, and he who is not loved, is alone, everywhere and with every one."

"Albert! Albert! you rend my heart! Come, take me away. In the light of day I shall perhaps see more clearly into my own destiny."

CHAPTER LVII.

ALBERT obeyed, and when they began to descend from the base of the Schreckenstein to the valleys beneath, Consuelo became calmer.

"Pardon me," said she, leaning gently on his arm; "I have certainly been mad myself in the grotto."

"Why recall it, Consuelo? I should never have spoken of it; I knew that you would wish to efface it from your memory, as I must endeavour to blot it from mine."

"I do not wish to forget it, my friend, but to entreat your pardon for it. If I were to relate the strange vision which I had while listening to your Bohemian airs, you would find that I was out of my senses when I caused you such terror. You cannot believe that I would trifle with your reason or your repose. Heaven is my witness that I would lay down my life for you."

"I know that you set no great value on life, Consuelo; but I—I feel that I would covet it earnestly, if——"

"Well; if what?"

"If I were beloved even as I love."

"Albert, I love you as much as is allowable: I would doubtless love you as you deserve to be loved, if——"

"It is your turn to speak."

"If insurmountable obstacles did not make it a crime."

"And what are these obstacles? I vainly seek them around

you? I only find them in your heart—doubtless in the memory of the past."

"Do not speak of the past; it is hateful to me. I would rather die than live over that past again. Your rank, your fortune, the opposition and anger of your relatives, where should I find courage to meet these, Albert? I possess nothing in this world but my pride and independence: what would remain were I to sacrifice them?"

"My love and yours, if you loved me. But I feel that this is not the case, and I only ask your pity. How could you be humiliated by giving me happiness as an alms? Which of us could then take precedence of the other? How would you be lowered by my fortune? Could we not quickly cast it to the poor if it oppressed you? Know you not that I have long resolved to employ it according to my convictions and my tastes; that is to say, to get rid of it, when my father's loss should add the trouble of his inheritance to that of separation? Are you afraid of being rich? I have vowed poverty. Are you afraid of my name rendering you illustrious? It is a false name; the true one is proscribed. True, I shall never resume it, lest I were to injure the memory of my father; but in my obscurity I swear to you no one shall be dazzled by it, and as to the opposition of my friends—oh! if there be no other obstacle but that—only tell me so, and you shall see!"

"It is the greatest of all; the only one which all my devotion, all my gratitude towards you cannot remove."

"You do not speak the truth, Consuelo. You dare not swear it! It is not the only obstacle."

Consuelo hesitated. She had never told an untruth, yet she wished to repair the evil she had done her friend, who had saved her life, and who had watched over her for months with the tender solicitude of a mother. She wished to soften her refusal by pointing out obstacles which she really believed insurmountable. But Albert's questions troubled her, and her own heart was a labyrinth in which she lost herself, because she could not say with certainty whether she loved or hated this singular man, towards whom a mysterious and powerful sympathy had attracted her, whilst at the same time an invincible dread, and something even approaching dislike, made her tremble at the mere idea of an engagement with him.

It seemed to her at this moment as if she hated Anzoleto. Could it be otherwise when she compared his coarse selfishness, his low ambition, his baseness, his perfidy, with Albert's generous, humane, pure spirit, so deeply imbued with lofty virtue? The only stain which could sully the latter was this attempt on Zdenko's life, which she could not help believing. But this suspicion might be the offspring of her imagination, a nightmare which a moment's explanation could dispel. She pretended to be preoccupied, and not to have heard Albert's last question. "Heavens!" she exclaimed, stopping to look at a peasant who passed at some distance, "I thought I saw Zdenko."

Albert shuddered, dropped Consuelo's arm which he held within his own, took a few steps forward, then stopped and returned towards her, saying, "What an error is yours, Consuelo! this man has not the least resemblance to"——he could not say Zdenko; his features betrayed violent agitation.

"You thought it yourself however for a moment," said Consuelo, who looked at him attentively.

"I am near-sighted, and I ought to have recollected that this meeting was impossible."

"Impossible? Zdenko is then far away?"

"So far, that you need fear nothing from his madness."

"Can you explain his sudden hatred to me after his previous display of sympathy?"

"I told you that it arose from a dream which he had on the eve of your descent into the cavern. He saw you in a vision follow me to the altar, where you consented to pledge your faith to me; and there you sang our old Bohemian hymn with a clear and thrilling voice which made the whole church ring; and while you sang he saw me grow pale, and sink into the floor, until at length I was dead and buried in the sepulchre of my fathers. Then he beheld you cast away your hymeneal crown, push the flat stone over my head, which covered me on the instant, and dance on it, singing incomprehensible words in an unknown language, with all the marks of unbounded joy. Enraged, he threw himself on you; but you had already disappeared in a thick vapour, and he awoke, bathed in perspiration and transported with anger. He awoke me also, for his cries and imprecations made the vault echo again. I found it difficult to induce him to narrate his dream, and still more to hinder him from looking upon it as the counterpart of my future destiny. I could not easily convince him, for I was myself labouring under morbid mental excitement, and had never tried previously to dissuade him when I saw him place implicit belief in his visions and dreams. Nevertheless, I hoped that he had ceased to think of it or attach any importance to it, for he never said a word on the subject; and when I asked him to go and speak to you about me, he did not oppose it. It never entered into his conceptions that you should seek me here, and his frenzy was roused only when he saw you attempt the task. Nevertheless he displayed no hatred against you till the moment we met him on our return from the subterranean galleries. He then informed me very laconically in Bohemian that he intended to deliver me from you—that was his expression—and to destroy you the first time he met you alone; for that you were the bane of my life, and had my death written in your eyes. Pardon these details, and say if I had not ground for apprehension. Let us speak no more about it if you please, the subject is truly painful. I loved Zdenko as a second self. His mental wanderings were identified with my own to such an extent, that we had the same dreams, the same thoughts, and even the same physical indispositions. But he was more

cheerful, and to some extent of a more poetical turn than myself; the phantoms which appalled me were, to his more genial organization, simply melancholy or perchance even gay. The greatest difference between us was that my attacks were irregular, whereas he was ever the same. While I was a prey to delirium or despair, he lived constantly in a kind of dream, in which all objects assumed a symbolical aspect; and this was even of so sweet and gentle a form, that in my lucid moments, certainly the most painful of all, I required the sight of his peaceful delusion to cheer and reconcile me to life."

"Oh, my friend!" said Consuelo, "you should hate me, as I hate myself for having deprived you of so devoted and precious a friend! But his exile has lasted long enough; he is by this time surely recovered from his temporary attack."

"Probably," said Albert, with a strange and bitter smile.

"Well, then," replied Consuelo, whose mind revolted at the idea of Zdenko's death, "why not recall him? I should see him without fear, I assure you, and we should make him forget his prejudices."

"Do not speak of it, Consuelo," said Albert, sorrowfully; "he will never return. I have sacrificed my best friend, my companion, my servant, my stay—my provident, laborious mother—my dear, submissive, unconscious child; he who provided for all my wants, for my innocent yet melancholy pleasures; he who upheld me in moments of despair, and who resorted to force and cunning to prevent me from leaving my cell, when he saw me incapable of preserving my own dignity and existence in the world of living men. I have made this sacrifice without remorse, because I felt I ought; for since you have faced the dangers of the cavern and restored me to reason and a sense of duty, you are at once more sacred and precious to me than even Zdenko himself."

"This is an error—an outrage, Albert! A moment's courage is not to be compared to a whole life of devotion."

"Do not suppose that a wild and selfish love has induced me to act as I have done. I should have thrust it back into my bosom, and shut myself up in my cavern with Zdenko, rather than break the heart of the best of men. But the hand of Providence was in it. I had resisted the impulse which mastered me; had fled from your sight so long as the dreams and presentiments which made me hope to find in you an angel of mercy, were unrealized. Up to the moment when a frightful vision deranged the gentle and pious Zdenko, he shared my aspirations, my hopes, my fears, and my religious desires. Poor soul! he mistook you the very day you declared yourself. The light of his soul grew dim, and he was condemned to confusion and despair. It was my duty also to abandon him; for you appeared wrapt in rays of glory, your descent was a prodigy, and you cleared away the mists from my eyes, by words which your calm intellect and education as an artist did not permit you to study and prepare. Pity and

charity alike inspired you, and under their wonder-working influence you told me what I ought to do in order to know and understand the life of man."

"What then did I say so wise and so good? Truly, Albert, I know not."

"Nor I either; but Heaven was in your voice and in the calm serenity of your looks. With you I learned in an instant that which I never should have learned alone. I knew that my previous life was an expiation, a martyrdom; and I sought the accomplishment of my destiny in darkness, solitude, and tears—in anger, study, penance, and macerations. You gave me another life, another martyrdom—one all patience, sweetness, toleration, and devotion. My duties, which you so simply traced out for me, beginning with those towards my family—I had forgotten them, and my family, through excess of kindness, overlooked my faults. Thanks to you, I have atoned for them; and from the first day I knew you, I have felt, from the calmness that I experienced, that no more was required from me at present. I know, indeed, that this is not all, and I await the ulterior revelations of my destiny; but I have confidence, because I have found an oracle that I can consult. You are that oracle, Consuelo. You have received power over me, and I shall not rebel against it. I therefore ought not to have hesitated a moment between the power which was to regenerate me, and the poor passive creature who had hitherto shared my distresses and borne with my outbreaks."

"Do you speak of Zdenko? But how do you know that I might not have cured him also? You saw that I had already gained some power over him, since I could convince him by a word when he was about to kill me."

"Oh Heavens! it is too true! I have been wanting in faith. I was afraid. I knew what the oaths of Zdenko were. He had sworn to live only for me, and he kept his oath in my absence as since my return. When he swore to *destroy* you I did not think it possible to change his resolution, and I determined to offend, banish, crush, *destroy* him."

"To *destroy* him! What do you mean, Albert? Where is Zdenko?"

"You ask me, as God asked of Cain, 'Where is thy brother?'"

"Oh Heavens! you have not killed him, Albert?" And Consuelo, as she uttered the word, clung to Albert's arm, and looked at him with a mixture of pity and terror. But she recoiled from the proud and cold expression of his pale countenance, where grief seemed to have fixed her abode.

"I have not *killed* him, yet I have taken his life assuredly. And if I have preferred regret and repentance to the fear of seeing you assassinated by a madman, have you so little pity in your heart that you always recall my sorrow, and reproach me with the greatest sacrifice I could make? You also are cruel! Cruelty is never extinct in a human breast."

There was such solemnity in this reproach, the first that

Albert had ever addressed to her, that Consuelo felt more than ever the fear with which he inspired her. A sort of humiliation—weak, perhaps, but inherent in the female heart—replaced the pride with which she had listened to his passionate admiration. She felt herself humbled, no doubt misunderstood, because she did not wish to discover his secret, save with the intention, or at least the desire, of responding to his affection if he could justify himself. At the same time she perceived that she was guilty in the eyes of her lover, because, if he had really killed Zdenko, the only person in the world who had no right to condemn him, was she whose life required the sacrifice of another life infinitely precious to Albert.

Consuelo could not reply: she endeavoured to speak of something else, but tears choked her utterance. In seeing them flow, Albert was distressed in his turn; but she begged him never to recur to so painful a subject, and promised on her part, with a feeling bordering on despair, never to mention a name which caused him such terrible emotion. They were constrained and unhappy during the remainder of the day, and vainly endeavoured to converse on some other subject. Consuelo did not know either what she said or heard. This sad but deep tranquillity, with such a load on his conscience, bordered on madness, and Consuelo could not justify her friend save in remembering that he was mad. If he had killed some bandit in fair fight in order to save her life, she would have felt gratitude and perhaps admiration for his strength and courage; but this mysterious murder, doubtless perpetrated in the darkness of the cavern—this sepulchre dug in the very sanctuary—this morose silence after such a deed—the stoical fanaticism with which he dared to lead her to the grotto, and there deliver himself up to the charms of music—all this was horrible, and Consuelo felt that love for such a man was a feeling which could not enter her heart. "When could he have committed this murder?" she asked herself. "I have not for months seen a trace of remorse on his brow. Was there not, perhaps, blood on his hands some day when I offered him mine? Dreadful! He must be made of stone or ice, or else he loves me to the verge of madness. And I who so wished to inspire a boundless love—I who so bitterly regretted being loved so coldly! Behold what Heaven has reserved for me in answer to my wish!"

Then she once more endeavoured to guess at what time Albert had accomplished his horrible sacrifice. She thought it must have been during her severe illness, when she was indifferent to all outward things; but when she remembered the tender and delicate care which Albert had lavished on her, she could not reconcile the two characters, so dissimilar to each other, and to those of mankind in general.

Lost in dreary reverie, she received with an absent air the flowers which Albert gathered for her on their way, and which he knew she loved. She never even thought of leaving him

and entering the castle alone, so as to conceal their meeting; and whether it was that Albert thought no more about it, or that he deemed it unnecessary to dissemble any longer with his family, he did not suggest such a precaution, and they found themselves face to face with the canoness, at the entrance of the castle. For the first time, Consuelo—and, doubtless, Albert also—observed those features, which were rarely ugly in spite of their deformity, inflamed with anger.

"It is high time for you to return, signora," said she to the Porporina, in a voice trembling with indignation. "We were really uneasy about Count Albert. His father, who would not breakfast without him, wished to have a conference with him this morning, which you have thought proper to make him forget. And, as for yourself, there is a young fellow in the saloon who calls himself your brother, and who awaits your arrival with rather ill-bred impatience."

After having expressed herself in these extraordinary terms, the poor Wenceslawa, terrified at her own exploit, set off for her own apartment, where she coughed and wept for more than an hour.

CHAPTER LVIII.

"My aunt is in a strange mood," said Albert, as they ascended together the steps of the entrance. "I beg you will pardon her; and be assured that this very day she will alter her manner and language."

"My brother?" said Consuelo, stupified with the news which had just been announced, and not hearing what the young count said.

"I did not know you had a brother," said Albert, who was more struck by his aunt's ill-temper than by this occurrence. "You will doubtless be glad to see him, dear Consuelo, and I am rejoiced."

"Better not, signor count," replied Consuelo, a painful presentiment rapidly occurring to her mind: "some dreadful sorrow is perhaps in store for me, and——" She paused, trembling, for she was on the point of asking advice and protection; but she was afraid of drawing closer the bonds already existing between them; and, not daring either to receive or avoid the visiter who introduced himself to her under colour of an untruth, she felt her knees fail her, and, turning pale, was obliged to support herself against the balustrade.

"Do you fear bad news from your family?" said Albert, who now began to grow uneasy.

"I have no family," replied Consuelo, endeavouring to move on. She was about to say that she had no brother, but some vague terror prevented her. In crossing the dining-hall, she heard the creaking of the traveller's boots pacing backwards and forwards impatiently. By an involuntary movement she approached the young count, and, as she took his arm, pressed

it against her own, as if to seek refuge in his affection from the sufferings which she anticipated.

Albert, struck by this movement, felt a deadly apprehension. "Do not go in," said he, in a low tone of voice, "without me: I feel, by a sort of presentiment which has never yet failed me, that this brother is your enemy and mine. I am chilled—I am afraid, as if I were about to be forced to hate some one!"

Consuelo withdrew her arm, which Albert had pressed close to his bosom; she trembled lest he should adopt one of those singular ideas—one of those implacable resolutions—of which Zdenko's presumptive death afforded a deplorable instance.

"Let us part here," she said in German, for their voices could now be heard in the adjoining apartment. "I have nothing to fear at present; but, if the future threaten, Albert, be assured I shall have recourse to you."

Albert yielded with extreme reluctance. Fearing to be found wanting in delicacy, he dared not disobey; but he could not resolve to leave the hall. Consuelo, who understood his thoughts, closed the double doors of the saloon when she entered, in order that he might neither hear nor see what was about to occur. Anzoleto (for his effrontery left no doubt on her mind that it was indeed he) was prepared to salute her boldly, in the presence of witnesses, with a fraternal embrace; but when he saw her enter alone, pale, but cold and severe, he lost all his courage, and, stammering, threw himself at her feet. It was not necessary, indeed, for him to feign joy or tenderness; he experienced both these feelings in their full reality, at discovering her whom, notwithstanding his baseness, he had never ceased to love. He burst into tears, and as she would not let him take her hands, he covered the border of her garment with kisses and tears. Consuelo had not expected to find him thus. For months she had thought of him as he had appeared on the night of their separation—the most bitter, hateful, and detestable of men. That very morning she had seen him pass with an insolent and careless air. Now he was on his knees, repentant, prostrate, bathed in tears, as in the stormiest days of their once passionate reconciliations, and handsomer than ever; for his travelling costume, though common enough, became him to admiration, and his sunburnt complexion imparted a more manly expression to his classic features. Trembling like the dove in the grasp of the hawk, she was forced to seat herself and hide her face in her hands, to avoid the fascination of his gaze. This gesture, which Anzoleto took for shame, encouraged him, and the return of his evil thoughts soon destroyed the effect of his first warm and unaffected transports. Anzoleto, in flying from Venice, and the vexations inseparable from his faults, had no other aim but that of seeking his fortune; but he had always cherished the desire and expectation of once more finding out his dear Consuelo. Such talents as hers could not, in his opinion, remain

long hidden, and by dint of chatting with innkeepers, guides, and travellers, he left no means untried of procuring information. At Vienna he had met persons of distinction from his native city, to whom he had confessed his folly and his flight. They advised him to wait in some place at a distance from Venice, until Count Zustiniani had forgotton or forgiven his escapade; and, while promising to intercede for him, they gave him letters of introduction to Prague, Dresden, and Berlin. When passing by the Castle of the Giants, Anzoleto had never thought of questioning his guide; but after about half an hour's rapid ride, having paused to breathe the horses, he had entered into conversation with him relative to the people and the surrounding country. Naturally enough, the guide spoke of the lords of Rudolstadt, their strange mode of life, and particularly of the eccentricities of Count Albert, which were no longer a secret to anybody, especially since Doctor Wetzelius had declared open enmity towards him. The guide added to this the local gossip that the count had refused to marry his cousin, the beautiful Baroness Amelia de Rudolstadt, in order to take up with an adventuress, not so remarkable for her beauty as for her admirable singing, which enchanted every one.

This description was so applicable to Consuelo, that our traveller immediately asked the name of the adventuress, and learning that she was called the Porporina, instantly guessed the truth. He retraced his steps; and after having rapidly invented the pretext by which to introduce himself into so well guarded a castle, he continued to question his guide still farther. The man's gossip induced him to believe that Consuelo was the young count's betrothed, and was about to become his wife; for the story was, that she had enchanted the whole family, and instead of turning her out of doors as she deserved, they paid her more respect and attention than they had ever done to the Baroness Amelia.

These details stimulated Anzoleto quite as much as, and perhaps even more, than his real attachment for Consuelo. He had indeed sighed for the return of that peaceful existence which he had led with her; he had truly felt that in losing her advice and direction, he had destroyed, or at least put in jeopardy, the success of his musical career; and, in short, he was strongly attracted to her by a love at once selfish, deep-seated, and unconquerable. But to all this was added the vainglorious wish of disputing the affections of Consuelo with a rich and noble lover, of snatching her from a brilliant marriage, and causing it to be said in the neighbourhood and in the world, that this highly cherished girl, had preferred to follow his fortunes rather than become countess and chatelaine. He amused himself, therefore, by making his guide repeat that the Porporina was lady paramount at Riesenburg; and inwardly gloried in the childish idea that this same guide should relate to future travellers, that one day a gay young fellow rode up to

the inhospitable Castle of the Giants, *came, saw*, and *conquered*, and a day or two afterwards took his leave, carrying with him this pearl of singers, before the very eyes of the puissant lord of Rudolstadt.

At this idea he struck the rowels into his horse's sides, and laughed so loud and long, that the guide concluded that of the two certainly Count Albert was not the madder.

The canoness received Anzoleto with distrust, but did not like to dismiss him, as she hoped that he would perhaps take with him his pretended sister. He was out of temper when he learned that Consuelo was walking, and he questioned the domestics on the subject while they served breakfast. Only one of them understood a little Italian, and he replied, without any malicious intention, that he had seen the signora on the mountain with the young count. Anzoleto said to himself, that if Consuelo were the betrothed of the count, she would have the proud attitude of a person in her position; but if it were otherwise, she would be less certain of her standing, and would tremble before an old friend who might thwart her projects.

Anzoleto was too acute not to perceive the ill-temper and uneasiness with which the canoness viewed this long walk of Porporina with her nephew. As he did not see Count Christian, he thought that the guide must have misinformed him, that the family were displeased with the count's affection for the young adventuress, and that the latter would be abashed before her first lover.

Interpreting in this manner the irresistible emotion she had felt on first seeing him, he thought, when he saw her sink in her chair, fainting and agitated, that he might go any lengths. He therefore gave full scope to his eloquence, reproached himself for the past, humbled himself hypocritically, wept, related his torments and despair, painting them somewhat more poetically than the truth warranted, and finally implored her pardon with all the persuasive eloquence of a Venetian and an accomplished actor.

Agitated by his voice, and fearing her own weakness more than his remaining influence, Consuelo, who also had time for reflection during the last four months, was sufficiently self-possessed to detect in these professions and in this passionate eloquence, what she had already heard a thousand times at Venice, in the latter days of their unhappy attachment. It mortified her to find that he used the same assurances, the same oaths, as if nothing had happened since those quarrels in which she was far from suspecting the infamous part Anzoleto had played. Indignant at such audacity and such flowery language, when tears and shame alone should have manifested themselves, she cut him short by rising and coldly replying: "It is enough, Anzoleto; I have already pardoned you, and I wish to hear no more. Anger has given place to pity, and your misconduct and my sufferings are equally forgotten. There is nothing more to say. I thank you for the kindness

which induced you to interrupt your journey with a view to a reconciliation; but your pardon, as you see, was already granted. So now adieu!"

"I leave you?—I quit you?" exclaimed Anzoleto, now really terrified. "No! I would rather you would kill me at once. No! never should I be able to live without you. I could not do it, Consuelo—I have tried, and I know it is in vain. Where you are not, there is nothing for me. My hateful ambition, my miserable vanity, to which I wished, but in vain, to sacrifice my love, have been my torment, and have never yielded me a moment's pleasure. Your image follows me everywhere; the memory of our happiness, so pure, so chaste, so delightful (and where could you yourself find anything approaching to it?) is ever before my eyes; I am disgusted with all around me. Oh! Consuelo, do you remember the lovely nights at Venice, our boat, the stars, our endless songs, and your gentle lessons? Did I not love you then? If I have acted ill towards others, oh, do not forget that at least I have been faultless towards you! You once professed to love me; but how have you forgotten your pledge! I—thankless monster! wretch that I am!—have never once forgotten it; and I do not wish to forget it, although you do so without effort or regret."

"It is possible," replied Consuelo, struck by the truth which these words seemed to display, "that you do indeed regret this lost happiness—lost, destroyed by your own misconduct. It is a punishment which you must endure, and which I ought not to prevent. Happiness corrupted you, Anzoleto, and you require suffering to purify you. Go, and remember me, if this affliction prove salutary; if not, forget me, as I forget you—I, who have nothing either to expiate or atone."

"Ah! you have a heart of iron!" exclaimed Anzoleto, surprised and wounded by her tranquillity; "but do not expect thus to drive me away. It is possible that I annoy you, and that I am here somewhat in the way. You would sacrifice, I know, the memory of the past to rank and fortune. But it shall not be so. I will stay with you; and if I lose you it shall not be without a struggle. I will recall the past, and that too before all your new friends, if you force me to it. I will repeat the oaths which you made at the bedside of your dying mother, and which you repeated a hundred times on her tomb and in the churches where we knelt side by side, listened to the music, and conversing in whispers. I will tell your new lover that of which he is not aware—for they know nothing of you, not even that you were an actress. Yes, I will tell them; and we shall see if the noble Count Albert will dispute you with an actor, your friend, your equal, your betrothed, your lover. Ah! do not drive me to despair, Consuelo, or——"

"What! threats?" said the angry maiden; "at last I have found you out, Anzoleto. I rejoice at it, and I thank you for having raised the mask. Yes, thanks to Heaven! I shall regret and pity you no more. I see the venom which rankles within

your heart; I recognise your baseness and your hateful love. Go, wreak your vengeance—you will only do me a service; but unless you are equally expert in calumny as in insult, you cannot say anything to make me blush."

Thus saying, she retreated to the door, opened it, and was just leaving the room when she met Count Christian. Anzoleto, who had rushed forward to detain her by force or cunning, on seeing the venerable old man who advanced with an affable and majestic air after having kissed Consuelo's hand, fell back intimidated and bereft of his audacity.

CHAPTER LIX.

"Dear signora," said the old count, "pardon me for not having more courteously received your brother. I had forbidden them to interrupt me, as I had some important business to transact this morning, and they obeyed my directions too faithfully in thus leaving me in ignorance of the arrival of a guest so welcome to me and all my family. Be assured, sir," added he, turning to Anzoleto, "that I am happy to see in my house so near a relative of our beloved Porporina. I trust, therefore, that you will remain here as long as may be agreeable to you. I presume that after so long a separation you must have much to say to each other, and I hope you will not hesitate to enjoy at leisure a happiness in which I sincerely sympathize."

Contrary to his usual custom, Count Christian spoke to a stranger with ease. His timidity had long since disappeared towards the gentle Consuelo, and on this day a vivid ray of joy seemed to illumine his countenance, like those which the sun sheds before sinking beneath the horizon. Anzoleto was confused in the presence of that majesty which rectitude and serenity of soul reflect upon the brow of an aged and venerable man. He was well skilled to bow low before the nobles of his native land, but in his inmost soul he hated and mocked them. He had found only too much to despise in them, and in the fashionable world in which he had for some time lived. He had never before seen dignity so lofty, and politeness so cordial, as those of the old chatelain of Riesenburg. He stammered forth his thanks, and almost repented having procured by an imposition, the kind and fatherly reception with which he was greeted. He feared above all lest Consuelo should unmask him, by declaring to the count that he was not her brother, and he felt that he could not at this moment repay her with impertinence, and study his revenge.

"I feel much gratified by your lordship's goodness," replied Consuelo, after an instant's reflection; "but my brother, who is deeply sensible of its value, cannot have the happiness of profiting by it. Pressing business calls him to Prague, and he has just this moment taken leave of me."

"Impossible! you have hardly seen each other an instant," said the count.

"He has lost several hours in waiting for me," replied she, "and his moments are now counted. He knows very well," added she, looking at her pretended brother with a significant expression, "that he cannot remain here a minute longer."

This cold determination restored to Anzoleto all his hardihood and effrontery. "Let what will happen," said he, "I take the devil—I mean God," he added, recovering himself—"to witness, that I will not leave my dear sister so hastily as her reason and prudence require. I know of no business that is worth an instant of such happiness; and since my lord the count so generously permits me, I accept his invitation with gratitude. I shall remain, therefore, and my engagements at Prague must be fulfilled a little later, that is all."

"That is speaking like a thoughtless young man," returned Consuelo, offended. "There are some affairs in which honour calls more loudly than interest."

"It is speaking like a brother," replied Anzoleto; "but you always speak so like a queen, my good little sister."

"It is spoken like a good young man!" added the old count, holding out his hand to Anzoleto. "I know of no business which cannot be put off till the morrow. It is true that I have always been reproached for my indolence; but I have invariably found that more is lost by hastiness than by reflection. For example, my dear Porporina, it is now several days, I might say weeks, since I have had a request to make of you, and I have delayed it until now. I believe I have done well, and that the proper moment has arrived. Can you grant me today the hour's conversation I was just about to request when I was informed of your brother's arrival? It seems to me that this happy circumstance has occurred quite *apropos*, and perhaps he would not be out of place in the conference I propose."

"I am always, and at all hours, at your lordship's command," answered Consuelo. "As to my brother, he is yet a mere child, and I do not usually entrust with him my private affairs."

"I know that very well," returned Anzoleto, impudently; "but as my lord count authorizes me, I do not require any other permission than his to join in your conference."

"You will permit me to judge of what is proper for you and for myself," replied Consuelo, haughtily. "My lord count, I am ready to follow you to your apartment, and to listen to you with respect."

"You are very severe with this young man, who has so frank and cheerful an air," said the count, smiling; then turning towards Anzoleto: "Do not be impatient, my child," said he, "your turn will come. What I have to say to your sister cannot be concealed from you, and soon, I hope, she will permit me to confide it to you."

Anzoleto had the impertinence to reply to the unsuspecting

gaiety of the old man, by retaining his hand in his own, as if he wished to attach himself to him, and discover the secret from which Consuelo excluded him. He had not the good taste to perceive that he ought at least to have left the saloon, in order to spare him the necessity of doing so. When he found himself alone, he stamped with anger, fearing lest this young girl, now so collected and self-possessed, should disconcert all his plans, and cause him to be dismissed in spite of his address. He longed to glide stealthily through the house, and listen at all the doors. He left the saloon with this purpose, wandered in the gardens for a few moments, then ventured into the galleries, pretending, whenever he met a domestic, to be admiring the beautiful architecture of the château. But at three different times he saw passing, at some distance, a personage dressed in black and singularly grave, whose attention he was not very desirous of attracting. It was Albert, who appeared not to remark him, and yet who never lost sight of him. Anzoleto, seeing that he was a full head taller than himself, and observing the serious beauty of his features, perceived plainly that he had not so despicable a rival as he had at first thought, in the person of the madman of Riesenburg. He therefore decided to return to the saloon, and commenced trying his fine voice in the lofty apartment, as he passed his fingers absently over the keys of the harpsichord.

"My daughter," said Count Christian to Consuelo, after having led her to his study, and placed a large arm-chair for her, covered with red velvet with gold fringes, while he seated himself on an easy chair by her side, "I have a favour to ask of you, and yet I know not by what right I can do so while you are yet in ignorance of my intentions. May I flatter myself that my grey hairs, my tender esteem for you, and the friendship of the noble Porpora your adopted father, will inspire you with sufficient confidence in me to induce you to open your heart without reserve?"

Affected and yet somewhat terrified at this commencement, Consuelo raised the old man's hand to her lips, and frankly replied. "My lord count, I love and respect you as if I had the honour and happiness to be your daughter, and I can answer all your questions without fear and without evasion, in whatever concerns me personally."

"I will ask you nothing else, my dear daughter, and I thank you for this promise Believe me, I am as incapable of abusing your confidence, as I believe you incapable of breaking your pledge."

"I do believe it, my lord. Be pleased to speak."

"Well, then, my child," said the old man, encouragingly, "what is your name?"

"I have none," replied Consuelo, frankly; "my mother was called Rosmunda. At my baptism they named me Maria of Consolation; I never knew my father."

"But you are acquainted with his name?"

"No, Signor; I never heard him spoken of."

"Has Master Porpora adopted you? has he given you his name by any legal act?"

"No, Signor; among artists these things are not thought of. My generous master possesses nothing, and has nothing to bequeath. As to his name, it was unimportant in my situation whether I adopted it from custom or otherwise. If my talents justify it, it will be well; if not, I shall be unworthy of the honour of bearing it."

The count was silent for some moments; then taking Consuelo's hand—

"Your noble candour," said he, "gives me a yet higher opinion of you. Do not think that I ask these particulars in order to esteem you more or less according to your condition and birth. I wished to ascertain if you had any disinclination to tell the truth, and I see you have none. I am infinitely indebted to you; you are more ennobled by your character than we are by our birth and titles."

Consuelo smiled at the simplicity of the old patrician, who wondered that she could, without blushing, make so plain a declaration. There was apparent in his conduct a remnant of aristocratic prejudice, all the more tenacious that Christian had nobly combated and evidently desired to vanquish it.

"Now," said he, "I must put a question yet more delicate, and I require all your indulgence to excuse me."

"Fear nothing, Signor; I shall reply frankly."

"Well, then, my child, you are not married?"

"No, Signor."

"And——you are not a widow—you have no children?"

"I am not a widow—I have no children," replied Consuelo, who had a great inclination to laugh, although not well knowing what the count's drift was.

"And you are not engaged to any one? you are perfectly free?"

"Pardon, Signor; I was engaged with the consent, even by the command, of my dying mother, to a young man whom I loved since childhood, and to whom I was betrothed up to the period of my quitting Venice."

"Then you are engaged?" said the count, with a singular mixture of vexation and satisfaction.

"No, Signor, I am perfectly free," replied Consuelo. "He whom I loved, unworthily betrayed his faith, and I left him for ever."

"Then you did love him?" said the count, after a pause.

"From my heart."

"And——perhaps you love him still?"

"No, Signor, that is impossible."

"Then you have no wish to see him again?"

"It would be a torment to me. But since I am called upon to confess fully, as I do not wish to take any advantage of your esteem for me, I shall inform you of everything. We

lived together as children, followed the same amusements, drank from the same cup, we were ever together, we loved each other, and we were to be married. I had sworn to my mother to be prudent; I have kept my word, if indeed it be prudent to believe in a man who wished to deceive me, and repose confidence, affection, esteem, where they were not deserved. When he proved himself to be faithless, I tore him from my heart. This man without honour may indeed tell a different tale, but that is of no great importance to one in my humble position. Provided I sing well, nothing more is required of me. While I can pray without remorse before the crucifix on which I have sworn to my mother, I need not trouble myself as to what is thought of me. There is no one to blush on my account; no brothers, no cousins, to fight for my sake."

"No brothers?—but you have a brother?"

Consuelo was on the point of confiding all to the old count, under the seal of secresy; but she feared it would be base to seek any extrinsic defence against one who had so meanly threatened her. She thought that she herself should have the firmness to defend and deliver herself from the pursuit of Anzoleto. Besides, her generous soul recoiled at the idea of having the man expelled whom she had so faithfully loved. Whatever courtesy Count Christian might display in this case towards Anzoleto, however culpable the latter might be, she had not courage to subject him to such indignity. She replied therefore that she looked upon her brother as a person of little understanding, whom she was accustomed to treat as a child.

"But he is not surely an ill-conducted person?" said the count."

"Possibly," she replied; "I have little intercourse with him. Our characters and modes of thinking are quite different. Your highness might have observed that I was not anxious to detain him here."

"It shall be as you wish, my child; you have an excellent judgment; and now that you have confided everything to me with such noble frankness——"

"Pardon me, Signor," said Consuelo; "I have not told you everything, because you have not asked me. I am ignorant of your motives in putting these questions to me, but I presume that some one has spoken unfavourably of me, and that you wish to know if I am a discredit to your household. Hitherto your inquiries have been of so general a nature that I should have felt myself wanting in propriety if I had spoken of my affairs without your permission. But since you wish to know me thoroughly, I must mention a circumstance that will perhaps injure me in your estimation. It is not only possible, as you have often suspected, though I had no wish for it myself, that I should have embraced a theatrical career, but it is asserted that I appeared last season at Venice, under the name of Consuelo. I was called the Zingarella, and all Venice was acquainted with my appearance and my voice."

"Ha!" exclaimed the count, astounded at this new revelation; "you are then the wonder that created so great a sensation at Venice last year, and whom the Italian papers so often and so highly eulogized? The finest voice, the most splendid talents, that had appeared within the memory of man—"

"Upon the theatre of San Samuel, my lord. Those eulogiums were without doubt exaggerated; but it is an incontestible fact that I am that same Consuelo, that I sang in several operas—in one word, that I am an actress, or, to use a more polite term, a cantatrice. You can now judge if I deserve to retain your good opinion."

"This is very extraordinary! what a strange destiny!" said the count, absorbed in thought. "Have you told this to—to any one besides me, my child?"

"I have told nearly all to the count your son, my lord, although I did not enter into the details you have just heard."

"So Albert knows your birth, your former love, your profession?"

"Yes, my lord."

"It is well, my dear signora. I cannot thank you warmly enough for the admirable straightforwardness of your conduct towards us, and I promise you that you will have no reason to repent it. Now, Consuelo—(yes, I remember that was the name Albert gave you on your first coming, when he talked Spanish to you)—permit me to collect my thoughts a little. I feel deeply agitated. We have still many things to say to each other, and you must forgive a little anxiety on my part in coming to so grave a decision. Have the goodness to wait here for me an instant."

He left the room, and Consuelo, following him with her eyes, saw him, through the gilded glass doors, enter his oratory and kneel down with fervour.

Herself greatly agitated, she was lost in conjectures as to the object of a conversation which was ushered in with so much solemnity. At first she thought that Anzoleto, while waiting for her, had out of spite already done what he had threatened; that he had been talking to the chaplain or Hans, and that the manner in which he had spoken of her, had excited grave suspicions in the minds of her hosts. But Count Christian could not dissemble, and hitherto his manner and his words had announced increased affection, rather than a feeling of mistrust. Besides, the frankness of her answers had affected him as unexpected revelations would have done; the last especially had seemed to strike him like a flash of lightning. And now he was praying, he was asking God to enlighten and sustain him in the accomplishment of a great resolution. "Is he about to ask me to leave the house with my brother? Is he about to offer me money?" she asked herself. "Ah! may God preserve me from that insult! But no! this good old man is too high-minded, too good, to dream of humiliating me. What did he mean to say at first, and what can he mean to say now? Most

probably my long walk with his son may have given him uneasiness, and he is about to scold me. I have deserved it perhaps, and I will submit to his rebuke, since I cannot answer sincerely the questions which may be asked me respecting Albert. This is a trying day; my chest feels all on fire, and my throat is parched."

Count Christian soon returned. He was calm, and his pale countenance bore witness of a victory obtained over himself from a noble motive. "My daughter," said he to Consuelo, reseating himself beside her, and insisting on her retaining the sumptuous arm-chair which she had wished to yield to him, and on which she seemed enthroned, in spite of herself; "it is time that I should respond by my frankness to the openness and confidence which you have testified towards me. Consuelo, my son loves you.

Consuelo became pale and red by turns. She attempted to answer, but Christian interrupted her.

"It is not a question which I ask you," said he. "I should have no right to do so, and perhaps you would have none to answer me; for I know that you have not in any way encouraged Albert's hopes. He has told me all; and I believe him, for he has never told a falsehood, nor I either."

"Nor I either," said Consuelo, raising her eyes to heaven with an expression of mingled humility and pride. "Count Albert must have told you, my lord—"

"That you have repelled every idea of a union with him."

"It was my duty. I knew the usages and the ideas of the world; I knew that I was not made to be Count Albert's wife, for the sole reason that I esteem myself inferior to no person under God, and that I would not receive grace or favour from any one on earth."

"I know your just pride, Consuelo. I should consider it exaggerated, if Albert had been alone in the world; but believing as you did that I would not approve of such a union, you were right to answer as you have done."

"And now, my lord," said Consuelo, rising, "I understand what you are about to add, and beseech you to spare me the humiliation I feared. I will leave your house, as I would before this have left it, if I had thought I could do so without endangering the reason and perhaps the life of Count Albert, over whom I have more influence than I could have wished. Since you know what it was not permitted me to reveal to you, you can watch over him, prevent the bad effects of this separation, and resume the exercise of a care which belongs to you rather than to me. If I arrogated it to myself indiscreetly, it is a fault which God will forgive me; for he knows by what pure and disinterested feelings I was actuated."

"I know it," returned the count, "and God has spoken to my conscience, as Albert has spoken to my heart. Sit down therefore, Consuelo, and do not be hasty in condemning my intentions. It was not to order you to quit my house, but to

beseech you from my inmost soul to remain in it all your life, that I asked you to listen to me."

"All my life?" repeated Consuelo, falling back upon her chair, divided between the satisfaction she felt at this reparation made to her dignity, and the terror which such an offer caused her. "All my life! your lordship cannot mean what you are kind enough to say."

"I have thought seriously on it, my daughter," replied the count, with a melancholy smile, "and I feel that I shall not repent it. My son loves you to distraction, and you have complete power over his soul. It is you who restored him to me, you who ventured to seek him in some mysterious place which he will not disclose to me, but into which he says no one but a mother or a saint would have dared to penetrate. It is you who risked your life to save him from the gloomy seclusion and delirium which consumed him. Thanks to you he has ceased to cause us horrible anxiety by his absences. It is you who have restored him to calmness, health—in a word, to reason. For it must not be dissembled that my poor boy was mad, and it is certain that he is so no longer. We have passed nearly the whole night together, and he has displayed to me a wisdom superior to mine. I knew that you were to walk with him this morning, and I therefore authorized him to ask of you that which you refused to hear. You were afraid of me, dear Consuelo; you thought that the old Rudolstadt, encased in his aristocratic prejudices, would be ashamed to owe his son to you. Well! you were mistaken. The old Rudolstadt has had pride and prejudices without doubt; perhaps he has them still—he will not conceal his faults before you—but he now abjures them, and in the transport of a boundless gratitude, he thanks you for having restored to him his last, his only child!" So saying, Count Christian took both of Consuelo's hands in his, and covered them with kisses and tears.

CHAPTER LX.

CONSUELO was deeply affected by an explanation which restored to her her self-respect, and tranquillized her conscience. Until this moment she had often feared that she had imprudently yielded to the dictates of her generosity and her courage, but now she received their sanction and recompense. Her joyful tears mingled with those of the old man, and they both remained for some time too deeply agitated to continue the conversation.

Nevertheless Consuelo did not yet understand the proposition which had been made to her, and the count, thinking that he had sufficiently explained himself, regarded her silence and her tears as signs of assent and gratitude. "I will go," said he at last, "and bring my son to your feet, in order that he may unite his blessings with mine on learning the extent of his happiness."

"Stop, my lord!" said Consuelo, astonished at this haste. "I do not understand what you require of me. You approve of the attachment which Count Albert has manifested for me, and my gratitude and devotion towards him. You have given me your confidence, you know that I will not betray it: but how can I engage to consecrate my whole life to a friendship of so delicate a nature? I see clearly that you depend on time and on my reason, to preserve your son's health of mind and to calm the enthusiasm of his attachment for me. But I do not know if I shall long have that power; and even if such an intimacy were not dangerous for so excitable a nature as his, I am not free to devote my days to that glorious task. I am not my own mistress!"

"O heavens! what do you say, Consuelo? Did you not understand me then? Or did you deceive me in saying that you were free, that you had no attachment of the heart, no engagement, no family?"

"But, my lord," said Consuelo stupified, "I have an object, a vocation, a calling; I belong to the art to which I have devoted myself since my childhood."

"Great Heavens! what do you say? Do you wish to return to the stage?"

"On that point I am not decided, and I spoke the truth in affirming that my inclination did not lead me thither. I have hitherto experienced only excruciating sufferings in that stormy career, but I feel nevertheless that I should be rash in resolving to renounce it. It has been my destiny, and perhaps I cannot withdraw myself from the future which had been traced out for me. Whether I again appear on the stage, or only give lessons and concerts, I am still—I must be—a singer. What should I be good for otherwise? Where can I attain independence? In what pursuit can I occupy my mind, accustomed as it is to labour, and nursed by sweet sounds?"

"O Consuelo, Consuelo!" cried Count Christian, sadly, "what you say is too true. But I thought you loved my son, and now I see that you do not love him!"

"And what if I should learn to love him with the passion which I must feel in order to sacrifice myself for him, my lord?" cried Consuelo, growing impatient in her turn. "Do you think it absolutely impossible for a woman to feel love for Count Albert, that you ask me to remain always with him?"

"What! can I have explained myself so badly, or do you think me crazy, dear Consuelo? Have I not asked your heart and your hand for my son? Have I not placed at your feet a legitimate and certainly an honourable alliance? If you loved Albert, you would doubtless find in the happiness of sharing his life, a sufficient recompense for the loss of your glory and your triumphs. But you do not love him, since you consider it impossible to renounce what you call your destiny!"

This explanation had been tardy, even without the good Christian being aware of it. It was not without a mixture of

terror and of extreme repugnance, that the old nobleman had sacrificed to the happiness of his son, all the ideas which he had cherished through life, all the prejudices of his caste: and even when, after a long and painful struggle with Albert and with himself, he had completed the sacrifice, he could not without an effort pronounce the absolute ratification of so terrible an act.

Consuelo perceived or guessed this; for at the moment when Count Christian appeared to despair of obtaining her consent to this marriage, there certainly was upon the old man's countenance an expression of involuntary joy, mingled with strange consternation.

Consuelo understood her situation in an instant, and a feeling of pride, perhaps a little too personal, served to increase her repugnance for the match proposed to her.

"You wish that I should marry Count Albert?" said she, still stunned by so strange a proposal. "You consent to call me daughter, give me your name, present me to your relatives and friends? Ah, my lord, how very deeply you love your son, and how much should your son love you!"

"If you find so much generosity in that, Consuelo, it is because your heart cannot conceive an equal amount, or that the object does not appear to you worthy of it."

"My lord," replied Consuelo, endeavouring to collect her thoughts, and hiding her face in her hands, "I must be dreaming. My pride is roused despite of my efforts at the idea of the humilation to which I would be exposed, should I accept the sacrifice suggested by your paternal love."

"And who would dare to offer them, Consuelo, when father and son should unite in shielding you with their legitimate ægis of protection?"

"And the canoness, my lord—she who fills here the post of a mother—would she see all that unmoved?"

"She would join her prayers to ours, if you promise to allow yourself to be persuaded. Do not ask more than the weakness of human nature can grant. A lover, a father, can undergo the grief and humiliation of a refusal; my sister could not. But with the certainty of success, we shall lead her to your arms."

"My lord," said Consuelo, trembling, "did Count Albert inform you that I loved him?"

"No," replied the count, suddenly recollecting himself, "Albert assured me the obstacle would be in your own heart; he has told me so a hundred times, but I could not believe him. Your reserve appeared to be founded on rectitude and delicacy, but I thought that in removing your scruples, I should obtain the avowal you refused to him."

"And what did he mention of our walk to-day?"

"A single word—'Try, my father; it is the only way of ascertaining whether pride or estrangement closes her heart against me.'"

"Alas, my lord, what will you think when I say that I do not know, myself?"

"I must think that it is estrangement, my dear Consuelo. Oh, my son, what a destiny is thine! You cannot gain the love of the only woman on whom you could bestow your own. This last misfortune is all that was needed!"

"Oh, Heavens! you must hate me, my lord. You do not understand that my pride resists, when yours is overcome. Perhaps the pride of a person in my situation may appear to have slight foundation, and yet at this moment there is as violent a combat waging in my heart, as that in which you yourself have proved victorious."

"I know it. Do not think, signora, that I so lightly esteem modesty, rectitude, and disinterestedness, as not to appreciate your lofty feelings. But what paternal love can overcome, I think woman's love may do also: you see I speak without reserve. Well, suppose that Albert's whole life, yours, and mine, should prove a continual struggle against the prejudices of the world; suppose we were to suffer long and much, would not our mutual tenderness, the approval of our conscience, and the fruits of our devotion render us stronger than this world united? Toils which seem heavy to you and to us, are lightened by devoted love. But this love you timidly seek in the depths of your soul, and do not find, Consuelo, because it is not there."

"Yes, that is indeed the question," said Consuelo, pressing her hands upon her heart; "the rest is nothing. I too had prejudices; your example proves that I ought to overcome them and be great and heroic like you. Let us then speak no more of my aversion, my false shame. Let us not even speak of the future—of my profession," added she, sighing deeply. "I could renounce all—if—if I loved Albert. This is what I must find out. Listen to me, my lord. I have asked myself this question a hundred times, but never so securely as I now can with your consent. How could I seriously interrogate myself when even the question seemed a madness and a crime? Now I think I may know and decide, but I ask a few days to collect my thoughts, to discover whether this devotion which I experience towards him, the unlimited esteem, great good-will and respect which his virtues inspire, the extraordinary sympathy and strange power which he exercises over me, be love or admiration; for I experience all this, and yet it is combatted by an indefinable terror, profound sadness, and—I shall tell you everything, my noble friend—by the memory of a love less enthusiastic, but far more sweet and tender, and in nothing resembling this."

"Strange and noble girl!" replied Christian with emotion, "what wisdom and at the same time what strange ideas, in your words and thoughts! You resemble my poor Albert in many respects, and the agitation and uncertainty of your feelings recall to me my wife—my noble, my beautiful, my melancholy Wanda! O, Consuelo! you awaken in me a recollection

at once tender and bitter in the extreme. I was about to say to you: surmount these irresolutions, triumph over those dislikes, love—from virtue, from greatness of soul, from compassion, from the effort of a noble and pious charity—this poor man who adores you, and who, while perhaps making you unhappy, will owe his salvation to you, and will entitle you to a heavenly recompense. But you have recalled to my mind his mother—his mother who gave herself to me from duty and from friendship. She could not feel for me, a simple, gentle, timid man, the enthusiasm with which her imagination burned. Still she was faithful and generous to the last; but how she suffered! Alas! her affection was at once my joy and my punishment; her constancy, my pride and my remorse. She died in suffering, and my heart was broken for ever. And now, if I am a useless being, worn out, dead before being buried, do not be too much astonished, Consuelo. I have suffered what no one has ever known, what I have never spoken of to any one, and what I now confess to you with trembling. Ah! rather than induce you to make such a sacrifice, rather than advise Albert to accept it, may my eyes close in sadness and my son at once sink under his sad fate. I know too well the cost of endeavouring to force nature and combating the insatiable desires of the soul. Take time therefore to reflect, my daughter," added the old count, pressing Consuelo to his breast, which heaved with emotion, and kissing her noble brow with a father's love. "It will be much better so. If you must refuse, Albert, when prepared by anxious uncertainty, will not be so utterly prostrated as he would now be by the frightful news."

They separated with this understanding; and Consuelo, stealing through the galleries in the fear of meeting Anzoleto, shut herself up in her chamber, overpowered with emotion and fatigue.

At first she endeavoured to take a little rest, in order to attain the calmness which she felt to be necessary. She felt exhausted, and, throwing herself on her bed, she soon fell into a state of torpor which was more painful than refreshing. She had wished to go to sleep whilst thinking of Albert, in order that in her dreams she might perhaps be visited with one of those mysterious revelations which sometimes serve to guide and mature our decisions. But the interrupted dreams which she had for several hours, constantly recalled Anzoleto, instead of Albert, to her thoughts. It was always Venice, always the Corte Minelli, always her first love, calm, smiling, and poetic!

Every time she awoke, the remembrance of Albert was connected with the gloomy grotto; or the sound of his violin, echoing tenfold in the solitude, evoked the dead, and wailed over the freshly closed tomb of Zdenko. Fear and sorrow thus closed her heart against the impulses of affection. The future which was required of her, seemed filled with chill darkness and bloody visions, while the radiant and fruitful past occupied all her thoughts, and caused her heart to beat. It seemed then as

if she heard her voice echoing in space, filling all nature, and mounting upwards even to the immeasurable heavens; but when the sounds of the violin recurred to her memory, it seemed as if her voice became hoarse and hollow, and died away in mournful wailings in the depths of the earth.

These wandering visions fatigued her so much that she rose in order to dispel them: the first sound of the bell informed her that dinner would be served in half an hour, and she went to her toilet, her mind still full of the same ideas. But how strange!—for the first time in her life she was more attentive to the mirror, and the adjustment of her attire, than to the serious problems she would fain resolve. She made herself beautiful in spite of herself, and wished to be so. It was not to awaken jealousy in rival lovers that this coquettish whim had seized her, for she thought and could think only of one. Albert had never made an allusion to her appearance. In the enthusiasm of passion he perhaps deemed her more beautiful than she was; but his thoughts were so devoted and his love so great, that he would have considered it profanation to have looked at her with the intoxicated gaze of a lover or the satisfied scrutiny of an artist. To him she was always enveloped in a cloud which his gaze never dared to penetrate, and in his thoughts she was ever surrounded by a beaming halo. Whatever she was, he saw her always the same. He had seen her half dead, emaciated, prostrate, more like a spectre than a woman. He had then sought in her features with anxiety and attention for the evidence of disease; but he never seemed to perceive moments of ugliness, or dream that she could be an object of terror or disgust. And now that she had recovered the splendour of youth and health, he had never inquired of himself whether she had lost or gained in beauty. She was all to him in life and in death, the ideal of youth, beauty, and sublimity. Therefore Consuelo had never thought of him while arranging her dress before the mirror.

But how different was it with Anzoleto! how carefully had he examined, judged, and compared, on the day that he sought to find if she were ugly. He had taken into account the slightest graces of her form, the least efforts she had made to please. How well was he acquainted with her hair, her arms, her feet, her walk, the colours which became her, even the least fold of her garment; and with what ardent vivacity had he praised her, with what voluptuous languor had he contemplated her! The innocent girl, indeed, had not then understood the emotions of her own heart; nor did she yet understand them, though she felt them not the less at the idea of appearing before him. She was angry with herself, blushed with shame and vexation, and tried to adorn herself for Albert alone, but nevertheless sought out the head-dress, the ribbon, and even the very look that pleased Anzoleto. "Alas! alas!" said she, tearing herself from the mirror when her toilet was completed: "it is true, then, that I can think only of him, and

that past happiness exercises a greater power over me than present scorn and the promise of another love! I may look forward to the future, but without him it is but terror and despair. What would it be with him? Ah! well I know that the days of Venice can never return; that innocence can dwell with us no more; that the soul of Anzoleto is utterly corrupt; that his caresses would degrade me, and that our life would be hourly poisoned by shame, jealousy, regret, and fear."

Questioning herself on this point with sincerity, Consuelo saw that she was not deceived, and that she had not the remotest wish to please Anzoleto. She loved him indeed no longer in the present; she almost hated and feared him as regarded the future, in which his faults could only become more aggravated; but then she cherished his memory in the past to such a degree, that neither in heart nor mind could she sever herself from it. He was henceforward to her but as a picture which recalled the adored object of past happiness; but, like one who hides herself from her new husband to look upon the image of the first, she felt that the memory of the past was better than the living present.

CHAPTER LXI.

Consuelo had too much judgment and elevation of character not to know, that, of the two attachments which she inspired, the truest, the most noble, and most precious, was beyond all comparison that of Albert. Thus, when she again found herself between them, she thought she had triumphed over the enemy. The earnest look of Albert, which seemed to penetrate her very soul—the gentle yet firm pressure of his faithful hand—gave her to understand that he knew the result of her conference with Count Christian, and that he waited her decision with submission and gratitude. In reality, Albert had obtained more than he hoped for; and even this irresolution was sweet after what he had feared, so much was he astonished at Anzoleto's impertinent folly. The latter, on the contrary, was armed with all his boldness. Divining pretty nearly the state of matters around him, he was determined to battle foot by foot, should they even thrust him neck and shoulders out of the house. His free and easy attitude, and his forward jeering look, inspired Consuelo with the deepest disgust; and when he impudently approached to offer his hand to conduct her to the table, she turned her head, and took in preference that of Albert.

As usual, the young count seated himself opposite Consuelo, and Count Christian placed her on his left, where Amelia had formerly sat. The chaplain's usual place was to the left of Consuelo, but the canoness invited the pretended brother to seat himself between them, and in this way Anzoleto's sneers could be overheard by Consuelo, and his irreverent sallies scandalize the old priest, as he had intended.

Anzoleto's plan was exceedingly simple. He wished to make himself intolerable to that part of the family whom he presumed hostile to the projected marriage, so as to give them the worst possible impression of the connexions and birth of Consuelo. "We shall see," said he, "if they can swallow *the brother* that I will cook for them."

Anzoleto, although a poor singer and tragedian, was yet an excellent comic performer. He had seen enough of the world to enable him to imitate with ease the elegant manners and language of good society; but this part might have only served to reconcile the canoness to the low extraction of Consuelo, and he took the opposite one with the more ease that it was natural to him. Being well assured that Wenceslawa, notwithstanding her determination only to speak German—the language of the Court and of all loyal subjects—did not lose a word of what he said in Italian, he began to chatter right and left, and to quaff the generous wine of Hungary, which, hardened as he was to the most heady drinks, he did not fear, but the heady influence of which he affected to feel in order that he might assume the air of an inveterate drunkard.

He succeeded to admiration. Count Christian, who good-humouredly laughed at his first sallies, soon only smiled with an effort, and required all his urbanity as a host, as well as his paternal affection, to refrain from reproving the disagreeable future brother-in-law of his noble son. The angry chaplain fidgetted on his seat, and murmured exclamations in German which sounded very like exorcisms, while his dinner and digestion were sadly deranged. The canoness listened to the insolent guest with suppressed contempt and somewhat malignant satisfaction. At every fresh outbreak, she raised her eyes towards her brother, as if taking him to witness; and the good Christian, drooping his head, endeavoured to distract the attention of the auditors by some awkward enough reflection. Then the canoness looked at Albert; but Albert was immoveable—he appeared neither to see nor hear the absurd and vainglorious visitor.

The most cruelly tormented of all was undoubtedly poor Consuelo. At first she thought that Anzoleto had contracted these habits in a life of debauchery. for she had never seen him thus before. She was so disgusted and annoyed that she was about to quit the table; but when she perceived that it was no better than a scheme, she regained the self-possession suited to her innocence and dignity. She had not mixed herself up with the secrets and affections of this family to instal herself among them by means of intrigue. Their rank had never flattered her ambition, and her conscience was secure from the secret charges of the canoness. She felt, she knew, that Albert's love and his father's confidence, were superior to this miserable trial. The contempt which she felt for Anzoleto, cowardly and wicked in his vengeance, rendered her still more decided; once only her eyes met those of Albert, and they immediately

understood each other. Consuelo's said "*Yes!*" and Albert replied, "*In spite of all!*"

"It won't do," said Anzoleto, in a low tone, to Consuelo; for he had observed and passed his own comments on this interchange of looks.

"You have done me a great service," replied Consuelo; "and I thank you."

They spoke in the Venetian dialect, which seems composed only of vowels, and which the Romans and Florentines, when they first hear it, cannot always understand.

"I can imagine that you hate me," replied Anzoleto, "and that you think you will always hate me, but you shall not escape me for all that."

"You have unmasked yourself too soon," said Consuelo.

"But not too late," replied Anzoleto. "Come, *padre mio benedetto*," said he, addressing the chaplain, and giving him at the same time a jog, so as to spill half his wine, "drink more vigorously of this famous wine, which is equally good for body and soul. Signor Count," said he, extending his glass to Count Christian, "you keep there beside your heart a flask of yellow crystal which sparkles like the sun. I feel that if I were to swallow but a drop of that nectar, that I should be changed into a demigod."

"Take care, my child," said the count, placing his wasted and meagre hand, covered with rings, on the cut neck of the flask; "the wine of old men sometimes closes the mouth of the young."

"Your anger has made you as handsome as a young witch," said Anzoleto to Consuelo, in good, clear Italian, so that every one could understand him. "You remind me of the *Diavolessa* of Galuppi, which you played so well last year at Venice. Ha! Signor Count, do you intend to keep my sister long in this gilt cage, lined with silk? She is a singing-bird, I must tell you, and a bird that loses its voice soon loses its feathers also. She is well off here, I admit; but the public, who ran crazy after her, want her back to them again. As to myself, were you to give me your name and your castle, all the wine in your cellar, and your chaplain into the bargain, I would not part with my footlights, my buskin, or my roulades."

"Then you are an actor also?" said the canoness, with an air of cold contempt.

"Comedian and jack-pudding, at your service, *illustrissima*," replied Anzoleto, without being at all disconcerted.

"Has he any talent?" asked old Christian, turning to Consuelo with a calm and benevolent air.

"None whatever," replied Consuelo, looking at her adversary with an air of pity.

"If that be true, it is you who are to blame," said Anzoleto; "for I am your pupil. I hope, however," continued he in Venetian, "that I have still enough to frustrate your plans."

"You will only harm yourself," replied Consuelo in the same

dialect. "Base intentions contaminate the heart, and yours will suffer more than you could possibly cause me to do, in the opinion of others."

"I am delighted to see that you accept my challenge. To arms then, my fair amazon; it is of no use to lower the visor of your casque, I see uneasiness and fear painted in your eyes."

"Alas! you can only see there profound sorrow for your degradation. I hoped to have forgotten the contempt I owe you, and you force me to remember it."

"Contempt and love often go together."

"In mean souls."

"In the proudest. It has been and always will be so."

The same scene lasted during the whole of dinner. When they retired into the drawing-room, the canoness, who appeared determined to amuse herself with Anzoleto's impertinence, requested him to sing. He scarcely waited to be asked, and after vigorously preluding upon the old creaking harpsichord with his sinewy fingers, he thundered out one of those songs with which he had been in the habit of enlivening Zustiniani's select suppers. The words were rather free. The canoness did not understand them, but felt amused herself at the force with which he uttered them. Count Christian could not avoid being struck with the fine voice and wonderful execution of the singer. He abandoned himself with artless delight to the pleasure of hearing him, and, when the first air was concluded, asked for another. Albert, who was seated by the side of Consuelo, appeared deaf to all that passed, and said not a word. Anzoleto imagined that he was annoyed, and that he at last felt himself surpassed in something. His design had been to banish his auditors by his musical improprieties; but seeing, that whether from the innocence of his hosts, or from their ignorance of the language, it was labour lost, he gave himself up to the thirst for admiration, and sang for the pleasure of singing; and besides, he wished to let Consuelo see that he had improved. He had in fact made considerable progress in the species of talent he possessed. His voice had perhaps already lost its original freshness, but he had become more complete master of it, and more skilful in the art of overcoming the difficulties towards which his taste and genius continually led him. He sang well, and received warm eulogiums from Count Christian, from the canoness, and even from the chaplain, who liked display, and who considered Consuelo's manner too simple and too natural to be very learned.

"You told us he had no talent," said the count to the latter: "you are either too severe or too modest as regards your pupil. He has a great deal of talent, and, moreover, I recognise in him something of your style and genius."

The good Christian wished by this little triumph of Anzoleto's, to efface the humiliation which his manner of conducting himself had caused his pretended sister. He therefore insisted much upon the merit of the singer, and the latter, who loved

to shine too well not too be already tired of the low part he had played, returned to the harpsichord, after having remarked that Count Albert became more and more pensive. The canoness, who dozed a little at the long pieces of music, asked for another Venetian song; and this time Anzoleto chose one which was in better taste. He knew that the popular airs were those which he sang the best. Even Consuelo herself had not the piquant accent and dialect in such perfection as he, a child of the lagunes, and gifted by nature with high comic powers.

He counterfeited with so much ease and grace, now the rough and frank manner of the fishermen of Istria, now the free and careless nonchalance of the gondoliers of Venice, that it was impossible not to look at and listen to him with the liveliest interest. His handsome features, flexible and expressive, assumed at one moment the grave and bold aspect of the former, at another the caressing and jesting cheerfulness of the latter mentioned race. His somewhat *outré* and extravagant costume which smacked strongly of Venice, added still more to the illusion, and on this occasion improved his personal advantages instead of injuring them. Consuelo, at first cold, was soon obliged to take refuge in indifference and preoccupation. Her emotion gained upon her more and more. She again saw all Venice in Anzoleto, and in that Venice the Anzoleto of former days, with his gaiety, his innocent love, and his childish pride. Her eyes filled with tears, and the merry strokes which made the others laugh, penetrated her heart with a feeling of deep and tender melancholy.

When the songs were ended, Count Christian asked for sacred music. "Oh, as for that," said Anzoleto, "I know everything which is sung at Venice; but they are all arranged for two voices, and unless my sister, who knows them also, will consent to sing with me, I shall not be able to comply with your highness' commands."

They all entreated Consuelo to sing. She refused for a long time, although she felt tempted to do so. At length, yielding to the request of Count Christian, who wished to induce her to be on good terms with her brother by seeming so himself, she seated herself beside Anzoleto, and began in a trembling voice one of those long hymns in two parts, divided into strophes of three verses, which are heard at Venice during the festivals of the church, and all the night long before the images of the madonnas at every corner. The rhyme is rather lively than otherwise, but in the monotony of the burden and in the poetical turn of the words, in which there is somewhat of a pagan expression, there is a sweet melancholy that gains upon the hearer by degrees, and carries him away.

Consuelo sang in a soft and mellow voice, in imitation of the women of Venice, and Anzoleto in one somewhat rough and guttural, like the young men of the same locality. He improvised at the same time on the harpsichord, a low unin-

terrupted yet cheerful accompaniment, which reminded his companion of the murmuring waters of the lagunes, and the sighing of the wind among the reeds. She imagined herself in Venice during one of its lovely summer nights, kneeling before one of the little chapels, covered with vines, and lighted by the feeble rays of a lamp reflected from the rippled waters of the canal. Oh! what a difference between this vision of Venice, with its blue sky, its gentle melodies, its azure waves, sparkling in the light of rapid flambeaus, or dotted with shining stars, and the harrowing emotions inspired by Albert's violin, on the margin of the dark, motionless, and haunted waters. Anzoleto had wakened up this magnificent vision, full of ideas of life and liberty; while the caverns and the wild and dreary hymns of old Bohemia, the heaps of bones on which flashed the light of torches, reflected on waters filled perhaps with the same sad relics, and in the midst of all these, the pale yet impassioned form of the ascetic Albert—the symbol of a hidden world—and the painful emotions arising from his incomprehensible fascination—were too much for the peaceful soul of the simple-minded Consuelo. Her southern origin still more than her education, revolted at this initiation into a love so stern and forbidding. Albert seemed to her the genius of the north—deep, earnest, sublime, but ever sorrowful—like the frozen nightwinds or the subterranean voices of winter torrents. His was a dreamy inquiring soul that sought into everything—the stormy nights, the course of meteors, the wild harmonies of the forests, and the half obliterated inscriptions of ancient tombs. Anzoleto, on the contrary, hot and fiery, was the image of the sunny south, drawing its inspiration from its rapid and luxuriant growth, and its pride from the riches hidden in its bosom. His was a life of sensation and feeling, drinking in pleasure at all his pores, artistic, rejoicing, careless, fancy-free, ignorant and indifferent alike as to good or ill, easily amused, heedless of reflection—in a word, the enemy and the antipodes of thought.

Between these two men, so diametrically opposed to each other, Consuelo was lifeless and inactive as a soul without a body. She loved the beautiful, thirsted after the ideal. Albert taught and offered it to her; but, arrested in the development of his genius by disease, he had given himself up too much to a life of thought. He knew so little the necessities of actual life. that he almost forgot his own existence. He never supposed that the gloomy ideas and objects to which he had familiarised himself, could, under the influence of love and virtue, have inspired his betrothed with any other sentiments than the soft enthusiasm of faith and happiness. He had not foreseen nor understood, that like a plant of the tropics plunged into a polar twilight, he had dragged Consuelo into an atmosphere of death. In short, he was not aware of the violence to her feelings which it would have required, to identify her being with his own.

Anzoleto, on the contrary, although wounding the feelings and disgusting the mind of Consuelo at every point, had all the energy and warmth of character which the *Flower of Spain* (as he was wont to call her) required to make her happy. In hearing him, she once more recalled her unthinking and joyous existence, her bird-like love of song, her life of calm and varied enjoyment, of innocence undisturbed by labour, of uprightness without effort, of pity without thought. But is not an artist something of a bird, and must he not thus mingle in the pursuits and drink of the cup of life common to his fellow-man, in order to perfect his character and make it useful and instructive to those around him?

Consuelo sang with a voice every moment more sweet and touching, as she gave herself up, by a vague and dreamy instinct, to the reflections which I have just made, perhaps at too great length, in her place. I must, however, be pardoned. For otherwise how could the reader understand the fatal mobility of feeling by which this sincere and prudent young girl, who had such good reason, only fifteen minutes before, to hate the perfidious Anzoleto, so far forgot herself as to listen to his voice, and to mingle, with a sort of delight, her sweet breath with his. The saloon, as has been already said, was too large to be properly lighted, and the day besides was declining. The music-stand of the instrument, on which Anzoleto had left a large sheet of music, concealed them from those at a distance, and by degrees their heads approached closer and closer together. Anzoleto, still accompanying himself with one hand, passed his other arm round Consuelo's waist, and drew her insensibly towards him. Six months of indignation and grief vanished from her mind like a dream—she imagined herself in Venice—she was praying to the Madonna to bless her love for the dear betrothed her mother had given her, and who prayed with his hand locked in hers, his heart beating against her heart. At the end of a strophe she felt the burning lips of her first betrothed pressed against her own—she smothered a cry, and leaning on the harpsichord, burst into tears.

At this instant Count Albert returned, heard her sobs, and saw the insulting joy of Anzoleto. This interruption had not astonished the other spectators of this rapid scene, as no person had seen the kiss, and every one believed that the recollection of her infancy and the love of her art, had caused these tears. Count Christian was somewhat vexed at a sensitiveness that implied so much regret for pursuits of which he required the sacrifice. As for the canoness and the chaplain, they were rejoiced at it, hoping that the sacrifice could never take place. Albert had not yet even asked himself whether the Countess of Rudolstadt could once more become an artist or not. He would have accepted everything, permitted everything, even exacted everything, so that she should be happy and free—in retirement, in the world, or in the theatre—at her pleasure. His complete absence of prejudice or selfishness produced a

total want of foresight, even regarding the most simple matters. It never occurred to him that Consuelo should think of submitting to sacrifices which he did not wish to impose. But although not perceiving this first step, he saw beyond, as he always saw; he penetrated to the heart of the tree and placed his hand upon the cankerworm. Anzoleto's true relation towards Consuelo, his real object, and the feeling which he inspired, were revealed to him in an instant. He looked attentively at this man, between whom and himself there existed a violent antipathy, and on whom he had not deigned till then to cast a glance, because he would not hate the brother of Consuelo. He saw in him a bold, a dangerous, and a persevering lover. The noble Albert never thought of himself—a whisper of jealousy never entered his heart—the danger was all for Consuelo: for with his profound and lucid, yet delicate, vision—that vision which could hardly bear the light, nor distinguish colour and form—he read the soul, and penetrated by mysterious intuition into the most hidden thoughts of the wicked and abandoned. I shall not attempt to explain this strange gift by natural causes. Certain of his faculties appeared incomprehensible to those around him, as they appear to her who relates them, and who, at the end of a hundred years, is not a whit more advanced in their knowledge than the greatest intellects of her time. Albert, in laying bare the vain and selfish soul of his rival, did not say "Behold my enemy;" but he said "Behold the enemy of Consuelo." And without letting his discovery appear, he resolved to watch over and preserve her.

END

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